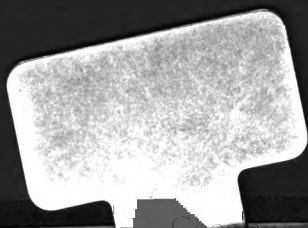

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DAILY MEDITATIONS
ON THE
MYSTERIES OF OUR HOLY FAITH
AND ON THE
LIVES OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST
AND OF THE SAINTS.

First Part

CONTAINS
MEDITATIONS FOR THE FIVE WEEKS OF ADVENT, FOR THE
SIX WEEKS AFTER CHRISTMAS, AS ALSO ON THE
MYSTERIES OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH

OF

REV. FATHER ALONSO DE ANDRADE, S.J.

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Nihil Obstat.

GEORGIUS PORTER, Soc. Jes.

Imprimatur.

✠ HENRICUS EDWARDUS,
Card. Archiep. Westmonast.

NOTE.

ALONSO DE ANDRADE, the author of the following Meditations, was a Spaniard; he was born at Toledo in the year 1592. He entered the Society of Jesus in 1612; after his studies, taught Moral Theology; for a time filled the office of Rector in the College of Piacenza, and devoted the last fifty years of his life to preaching and giving missions. His zeal and piety obtained for him a considerable reputation. He died an octogenarian at Madrid, on the 20th of June 1672. De Backer, "Ecrivains de la Compagnie de Jesus," 1 serie, p. 15, et seq., enumerates thirty-one works from the pen of Father de Andrada; many of them are translations which he undertook in the intervals of his missions.

The "Meditaciones Diarias," from which the Advent has been translated, were published in Madrid, in 4 vols. 16mo, in 1660; again, in the same place, in 4 vols. 8vo, in 1793; lastly, the edition used for the present translation was printed in 4 vols. 8vo, also at Madrid in 1857.

PREFACE.

“Before prayer prepare thy soul : and be not as a man that tempteth God.”—ECCLES. xviii. 23.

Sec. I. The Holy Ghost having enjoined on the faithful, by the mouth of Ecclesiasticus, the holy exercise of prayer, charging them particularly to give themselves up to it with all the powers of their souls as to the most important occupation they can have, on which depends their progress in sanctity in this life, as well as their holy end and eternal felicity ; in order that they may not err in a matter of such great importance, lays down for them the method they should follow in its exercise, admonishing them to place themselves in fitting dispositions for prayer, and to prepare themselves diligently before entering on it, as otherwise they will be as the man that tempteth God, who having the grace of prayer within his reach, and the power of obtaining fruit through the ordinary means afforded by the Church, will not avail himself of them, but wishes to obtain his end without labour or trouble on his part, and that everything should come to him as it were miraculously by the power of God ; whilst He has determined in His wonderful providence to give us His graces and favours through the ordinary channels, co-operating with His creatures and assisting our actions, and not without them ; for as St. Austin says, He who created thee without thee, will not save thee without thee, because it is God's will to help us with His grace, and

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that we should make mental prayer, raising our hearts to His Divine Majesty, and placing ourselves in His presence that He may bestow His favours on us ; but it is not His will that we should be idle, and, as it were, stupefied over our prayers, leaving all the work to Him, but diligent and fervent, labouring with the understanding, the memory, and the will, turning over in our minds and meditating the divine mysteries, and dwelling on the words and counsels of the Holy Spirit and the heroic virtues of the saints, making, like industrious bees, out of these flowers sweet honey-combs full of devotion for our souls, for which purpose it is necessary to prepare the matter of which they are to be made before entering on prayer, just as the bees cull the flowers and carry them to their hive before they make their comb, and to endeavour to do otherwise would be to tempt God as the Holy Spirit declares by the mouth of Ecclesiasticus in the text quoted above.

This refers to ordinary mental prayer, which is the work of the three powers of the soul,¹ memory, understanding, and will, grasping with the memory as though with the hand the points of the meditation, meditating on them with the understanding and exciting holy desires with the will ; but it does not refer to that exalted and special state of prayer in which God graciously communicates with the soul, pouring into it with the greatest liberality His gifts and His inspirations, and giving it His understanding and His light to know and love Him, for then, as St. Bernard says, all colloquy ceases, and the soul marvellously united with its God enjoys His mercies without labour but rather with indescribable joy and with a sweetness exceeding anything on earth ; this kind of prayer does not stand in need of meditations, and requires another sort of preparation more exalted and more complete, that of a pure mind and a most holy life ; neither is it to be obtained by our own efforts, but is granted by God to whom He wills, as Ecclesiasticus testifies, saying,

¹ Bern. Serm. infra oct. Epiph.

“For if it shall please the great Lord, He will fill him with the spirit of understanding : and He will pour forth the words of His wisdom as showers, and in his prayer he will confess to the Lord ” (Eccles. xxxix. 8, 9). All depends upon His Divine will, because He grants it to whom He wills, and how He wills, and when He pleases and it seems fit to Him.

Speaking therefore of ordinary mental prayer, which is practised by meditating and dwelling on the divine mysteries and the life of Christ and those of His saints, it is very advisable to prepare ourselves before entering on it, as has been explained ; just as the labourer draws water from the well to irrigate his garden, when none falls from the skies, but ceases his labour when the rain falls, as then the heavens do the work for him ; so in like manner the diligent servant of the Lord receives in prayer the waters of devotion and the light of divine inspirations, when God freely bestows them and sends them like rain upon his soul ; but when this heavenly rain fails, he labours to draw water, dwelling on these meditations with the understanding and assisting himself with his memory and imagination, through which means our Lord communicates to him the spirit of devotion and affections and holy desires of serving Him, and the lively ardour of divine love to aspire to the height of perfection.

Sec. II. The Holy Ghost advises us to prepare our souls before entering on prayer, in the words quoted above, words which the saints understand in two ways,—one is that we should make preparation, tuning ourselves by silence, mortification, and spiritual reading, just as we tune a musical instrument for singing, because if we enter on prayer untuned and distracted, full of useless and vain thoughts, everything will turn into wanderings and distractions, without our obtaining fruit from our prayer, and in this way is the preparation understood by St. John Chrysostom, St. Bernard, and many other saints. Others understand by this preparation the spiritual reading in which a person reads over and prepares the

points on which to meditate, because to take up the first matter which presents itself, or to remain in a state of suspense expecting that God will rain down devotion as He did manna of old, would be, as we have said, to tempt God. This interpretation is the ordinary one, and received practically by all, and in conformity therewith have the saints written so many books of meditation and prayer, and afford to the faithful daily matter for prayer and meditation, so that they may prepare themselves before commencing their mental prayer. But I understand the words quoted as referring to both modes of preparation, as well to that of the soul and heart, which should be tuned before prayer, as to the meditation and points to be dwelt upon during it ; for both things are necessary, and the one without the other will give little or no fruit, and if anyone does not go well-armed with silence and recollection of the senses, and having banished all useless thoughts and other matters, as St. Bernard used to do, and has not the matter of meditation prepared, nor the points arranged on which to meditate, he goes in manifest danger of not obtaining any advantage from his prayer ; and if he has the points of meditation well prepared, and enters on his prayer in a state of distraction and full of many cares, they will prevent his obtaining fruit from his prayer, wherefore both things are necessary for this preparation which the Holy Ghost demands from those who pray ; for just as those who sit down to eat require to be prepared by a proper state of health, as well as to have the dishes prepared, because the latter without the body being in fitting disposition will not benefit them, neither will the fitting disposition of body nourish them without the food. In like manner is it necessary that those who are to seat themselves at the table of prayer with God should prepare themselves in order that, on the one hand, they may approach in fitting dispositions free from sinful affection and exterior cares, and on the other hand may have their food for meditation and the matter on

which they are to found their prayer ready divided ; and for this end is this book written, to give fresh food to the soul for each day, so that by this variety it may, if it avoid the weariness occasioned by the continuance of the same food, though at the same time we do not thereby oblige it to leave whatever may be agreeable to it, or in which it may find more devotion, because this book is like a table abounding with various dishes, of which each can partake according to his requirements and devotion ; and, as many find devotion in following the order observed by the Church, accommodating themselves at each season to what she teaches or celebrates, we follow the same order, arranging the meditations according to the gospels and feasts of the season.

Sec. III. Seeing that the art of meditation and the necessary forms are known to all and are published in many books, I have no intention of laying them down here, and merely state briefly what our Father Saint Ignatius teaches in the book of "The Exercises," and that is, that every meditation, whatever may be its matter, contains five points, namely, 1st. Prelude ; 2d. Composition of place ; 3d. Petition ; 4th. Meditation ; and 5th. Colloquy. We call prelude that first entrance on prayer, or placing of oneself in the presence of God, which is the first thing to be done in prayer, reviving the faith which teaches how God in His immensity is present in all places, and is thus really and truly present where one is praying, and sees and hears not only the words spoken with the lips, but also those of the heart and the thoughts of the mind ; all is present before Him, and He knows and understands all. Wherefore we should enter His presence with fear and trembling, and with all respect and reverence such as is proper in the presence of so great a Lord ; and the first thing to be asked of Him is permission to address Him, acknowledging oneself to be dust and ashes, and unworthy to be in His presence, as the patriarch Abraham did when he said, "I will speak to my Lord, whereas I am dust and ashes" (Gen. xviii. 27). We then should

grieve deeply for having offended Him, making an act of contrition, and begging forgiveness for our sins from the bottom of our hearts, and with a sincere purpose of amendment ; all which should be done very briefly.

Then follows the composition of place, which is a means of fixing the imagination on the subject in order that it may not go wandering in different directions, and this is obtained by keeping the eyes of the soul on the spot where is the subject to be meditated upon ; for instance, if the subject is the pains of hell, on hell ; if the glory of heaven, on heaven ; if the Passion of Christ, on that part of the Passion which is to be meditated ; and then follows the petition begging our Lord to inspire the feeling we seek for, whether of fear, of love, or of compassion, &c., according to the subject of the meditation, which should always be in keeping with our necessity, as the remedy should be suitable to the disease of the patient. This being done as briefly as possible, we commence the meditation of the points prepared beforehand, dwelling on them with the understanding, and by means of the will exciting feeling and holy desires of loving and serving God, from which spring fervent colloquies of the soul, inflamed with the fire of His love by these meditations, as the Prophet David bears witness, when he says that he inflamed his heart with the living flames of divine love, meditating on the greatness of God, and the favours he received from His hand ; and although the masters of spiritual life usually place these aspirations at the end of the whole meditation, they do not do so because it is necessary to wait till the end of it to make them (for it is advisable to make them at each of the points of the meditation whenever the will finds itself moved thereto), but because they know that after dwelling on the points of the meditation, the soul will feel itself moved and inflamed with the love of God, and that, all on fire with these desires, it will offer them to His Divine Majesty ; and because as our Father Saint Ignatius teaches, the aspirations must be according to

the affection of each one, and to the movement he feels in his will, and cannot be laid down in the meditations, as is the case with the points on which the meditation is to be made ; for although from certain meditations there usually spring certain affections, yet as God works differently in different souls, moving some to one and some to another according to His holy will, the aspirations must be in accordance with the movement each one may feel in his heart, and therefore I shall usually (though not always) abstain from inserting aspirations in these meditations, as others have done, leaving it to the affection which God may work in the hearts of those engaged in prayer, so that each may make his aspirations according to the interior movement he may feel in his soul ; and I advise, what our Father Saint Ignatius also advises, that where a soul finds the sap of devotion and spiritual consolation, there he should pause and enjoy the heavenly dew which God communicates to him till he is satisfied, just as a thirsty person on finding a spring of water drinks from its stream till his thirst is completely sated. St. Bernard wrote a treatise, which he entitled the " Ladder of the Cloister," on the method of prayer, in which he lays down this doctrine very clearly, for which reason it has appeared to me useful to insert it here ; it is as follows :

The ladder of the religious has four spiritual steps, by which ladder they ascend from earth to heaven ; these steps are reading and meditation, prayer and contemplation ; reading seeks out meditation, and prayer demands contemplation ; agreeably to what our Lord says in the Gospel, " Seek and ye shall find, knock and they shall open to you ; " seek by reading, you shall find by meditation ; knock by prayer and they shall open to you in contemplation ; reading places the food in the mouth, meditation masticates, divides, and separates into various parts ; prayer finds the flavour and taste of what is meditated, and contemplation enjoys it and is as the sweetness which makes it agreeable and nutritious.¹

¹ Bern. Scal. Cl. in princip.

This is what St. Bernard says, and he then proceeds to confirm by an example the practice of his doctrine, which clearly supports that which we have laid down above ; and how necessary it is to make use of spiritual reading for mental prayer, and to have prepared the matter for meditation, and then according to the doctrine of the Saint, to make use of reflection in mental prayer, turning over and meditating on the points of the mysteries to which the prayer is directed, and also to employ the colloquies which St. Bernard calls prayer, each one addressing petitions to our Lord according to his affections, and finally pausing in contemplation of the subject of the meditation, relishing the devotion God communicates, and this is the fruit of the meditation and prayer.

But what I especially recommend to you is that, having finished your meditation, you turn your eyes again upon your prayer, as God looked again upon each of His works in the creation of the world, and examine attentively what fruit you have drawn from your prayer, what resolutions to serve Him ; for this is like collecting the grain from the threshing floor, and conveying it to the granary to make use of it and not to lose it ; and observe that this counsel is not only that of the spiritual Fathers, but of God Himself, given to Saint Teresa, whom He commanded not only to commit to memory the inspirations and good desires He communicated to her, but to take notes of them and write them down for greater security ; “ For if you write down,” said He to her, “ what men teach you, with more reason should you write down what I teach you, and what makes you worthy of such a master ;” it is then fitting that we should all take this advice and put it in practice. Saint Francis Xavier, in some advice he gives on this matter, teaches that in the examination of conscience each one should see and diligently examine whether he has put in execution the good resolutions which our Lord inspired him with during his prayer ; because if he allow

them to pass away without profit, he will make himself unworthy of fresh mercies, and the divine labourer will not sow fresh seed in the earth wherein He lost the first, fearful lest this seed also should not fructify.

Sec. IV. In these meditations the whole gospel is not transcribed, as it would greatly increase the matter; neither is it entirely omitted, as it is unavoidable to make some mention of it for the meditation of its teaching; and, therefore, so as not to fail in the latter way nor to exceed in the former, a short sketch is given of its contents, such as may be sufficient for the object in view.

Several meditations are laid down on the same gospel, following the advice of our Father Saint Ignatius, and of Saint Peter of Alcantara, who teach that it is highly advantageous not to pass hurriedly over the subjects of meditation, but to take them slowly, and till the soul has satisfied itself with one kind of food not to pass on quickly to another; for those who at table take a little of one dish and then of another do not satisfy themselves from any, and the variety of so many kinds of food prevents their good digestion and profits not,—one kind of food interfering with another; for this reason Galen holds that it is very advantageous for health not to change the kinds of food frequently, but to dedicate oneself to one, accustoming oneself to it; and the same happens with the food of the soul, which, being very frequently varied, it profits little, but a great deal when the gospel truths are slowly meditated, turning them over and over, becoming well acquainted with them, until they are thoroughly digested. To this end are the repetitions aimed which our Father Saint Ignatius generally puts in the meditations, enjoining that, after having meditated on any subject, such as sin, death, or judgment, &c., the exercitant should return to the same meditation, going over again and ruminating the points he has meditated, in order the better to acquaint himself with them and derive fresh fruit for his soul; for just as those who excavate mines first of all draw forth much earth before

they come across the vein of gold or silver, and do not desist from their intent till they find it, likewise so is it with those who by means of meditation excavate the rich mines of the gospel truths in which they frequently labour without much fruit, as it appears to them, drawing forth dry earth, without finding the vein of consolation and devotion ; but it is well to persevere and not to leave the meditation begun, passing quickly to others, but to go on digging in the same mine till they find the golden vein of devotion and spiritual consolation ; and for this reason we put several meditations on the same gospel, so that he who is engaged in prayer may dwell on the same subject for some space of time ; although in order to avoid the weariness which the repetition of the same subject usually produces, different points are brought forward, forming a new and different meditation, so that the variety may banish disgust, and the novelty excite the spiritual palate to taste the flavour of devotion.

We also call attention that in some meditations the saints who treated those subjects are quoted ; and if the quotations are not given to avoid prolixity, they are always contained in what they have written upon those gospels ; but when the authorities are from other different treatises, they are referred to either in the foot-notes, or in the body of the meditation, following in this the angelical doctor Saint Thomas, who follows this practice in the *Catena on the Gospels*.

FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT.

Christ our Lord being desirous, as St. Gregory tells us,¹ to find us well disposed for His coming, awakens us and prepares us by the recollection and fear of His judgments, and of the strict account of their lives He will demand on that day from all men, in order that the dread of that day may restrain us from offending Him, enliven

¹ Gregor. Homil. i. in Evang.

the understanding, and inflame the desire of seeing Him, and prepare us to receive Him worthily at this His first coming, when He comes to visit us so meekly and humbly; and that following now in His footsteps, we may not afterwards experience His terrible judgments, and for this same reason the Church preaches it to us at the beginning of Lent, and with a like intention I shall place at the beginning of this book the meditations referring not only to the last judgment, but also all those regarding the end of man, in order to move the will to the holy fear of God, and to sorrow for sin and an amendment of the whole life, which is the first step to be taken in the spiritual life, and is the plough, as Saint Peter Chrysologus says, by which the thistles and brambles of sin are to be rooted out and the soil of our consciences cleansed from the wickedness of vice, in order that it may receive and render fruitful the seed of the Divine word.

DAILY MEDITATIONS.

FIRST MEDITATION.

For the First Sunday of Advent.

“ON THE GENERAL JUDGMENT, SPOKEN OF IN THE GOSPEL
OF THIS DAY.”—LUKE xxi.

First Point.—Consider the fearful signs which will precede this last and final day of the world, like those which show themselves in men when their end arrives, and they find themselves drawing near to death, which Christ says will be such that men will be withered up and paralysed by mere fear, for the heavens themselves will be disturbed and diverted from their course, and from the order and concert they have followed up till that time; and the mechanism by which the whole world is directed and governed being disarranged, the world itself will be thrown into confusion, and the elements feeling their end approach will be disturbed, combating each other in a terrible manner; the sea will become enraged, breaking through its boundaries and rushing furiously over its barriers, will engulf in its abyss all who are navigating at that time; the winds will howl horribly and with such great fury that they will overturn the mountains and bury the cities; the earth will tremble, and its bowels, opening in many places, will bury men alive and will demolish all their buildings; and the wild beast will seek the towns, and the men the dens of

the animals and wild beasts, to take refuge therein, and none shall find safety; the stars will quit their places in the heavens and will fall upon the earth, as when a tree is shaken and the fruit falls to the ground; and finally fire, contrary to its nature, will fall from its sphere, and will burn up the whole earth and all that beautified it and was valuable in it, leaving it in all directions covered with mournful ashes. Consider what the day will be, when its eve is so dreadful and awful, and what will be the feelings of those who may be living at that time, and what would be thy feelings, thou who art filled with fear and trembling at a thunder clap in the clouds? Contemplate the world stripped of its outward appearance, and showing what it encloses in its bosom, which is a little dust and ashes; see how have ended its honours, its dignities, its riches, its pleasures, its cities, its gardens and paradise, and learn to despise what is worth so little, and to prize only what is eternal and true, and what will have no end.

Second Point.—Consider that the world being enveloped in this silence, the farce which is now played being ended, and reduced to its former nakedness, an archangel will appear on high, as the Apostle St. Paul says (1 Thess. iv. 15), and in a voice like a trumpet will summon all men to judgment, and this voice will be so powerful, that through the divine power it will resuscitate all the dead, gathering together their bodies and uniting them to their souls in a single moment in which it will collect them in the valley of Josaphat; look not on this as very distant, but as if it were happening now and thou didst see it, and wert present at the whole scene, for infallibly thou wilt be one of those who are to hear that voice, and to rise from their graves to go to judgment; see how solitary arise those who here were well attended; how the drama of this life ended all are equal; how already there are neither riches, nor pleasures, nor power, nor possessions, nor greatness, nor any difference between the nobleman and the peasant, nor between the master

and the servant ; how they are only accompanied by their works, and consider those which thou wouldst then wish thou hadst done ; see how the bad will arise, hideous, sorrowful, miserable, poor, and helpless ; listen to their wailings and to the penance they would do, if they were granted then but one hour of time, out of all those they now spend fruitlessly, and then turn thine eyes on the good and see them coming out of their graves, beautiful as the sun, bathed in joy and delight, and congratulating themselves a thousand times for the penance they did in this world, and the good works in which they employed the days of their lives ; and since thou must necessarily be in one of the two groups, avail thyself of the time God grants thee, and resolve in His presence to leave the free life which leads to perdition, and embrace with all thy strength the strict life which is the road to eternal and true life.

Third Point.—Consider how the heavens will then open, and Christ will come down on earth to judge the world, with great power and majesty, for He will come accompanied by all His angels and courtiers, and He will place His throne in the clouds, whither, as St. Paul says, all the elect will ascend, hastening to surround and accompany Him ; and the damned will remain on the earth, bound to it, without power to move, and overwhelmed by indescribable confusion and grief of heart. Oh ! what rage ! Oh, what indignation will they feel, seeing in such honour and glory those whom they despised here, and whom they held for mad and miserable persons, while they themselves are in such disgrace and shame. Each will carry written on his forehead, for his greater disgrace, his crimes and the reason of his sentence, which will be made manifest to the whole world, and thus will God dishonour the wicked on the day of judgment, and will honour the good, engraving His own name, as St. John testifies (Apoc. xiv. 1), on their foreheads, and the title of their glory, which will make them more resplendent than the sun ; remember that thou wilt necessarily be

present there, without having any means of escape, and see how dissimilar are the lots of the good and the bad ; and in as much as thou wouldest not wish to err in an affair so important to thee, for nothing less than eternal life or death is at stake, arrange thy affairs now as thou wouldest wish to have arranged them on that day of judgment.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the judgment will then commence, which will be so strict and the Judge so upright and rigorous, that, as St. Chrysostom says, He will cause the very angels to tremble ; there is no word, nor gesture, nor thought of which strict account will not then be demanded ; and the judgment will be such that the most just will, as holy Job says (Job ix. 3), be scarcely able to answer one out of a thousand accusations ; and if the just man will save himself with difficulty, whither will the wicked man and the sinner go to ? There none will intercede for another, neither will the Judge be softened by presents, nor will He receive excuses. Oh, how the hidden sins which have never been confessed will be there made public ! Thou didst sin in secret, as Nathan said to David (2 Kings xii. 12), and God will make it manifest on the day of that universal display of the world, in the sight of angels and of men ; behold thyself now, as thou wilt be then ; consider the account that will be demanded from thee, the charges that will be brought against thee, and the affliction in which thou wilt be without other advocates or protectors than thy works, awaiting the delivery of the sentence, and see what account thou couldst now give, and what sentence would now be passed on thee for thy past life ; and since thou hast time, cast thyself at the feet of the Judge, and with tears beg pardon for thy faults and time to remedy them and to do most condign penance for them ; make the saints thy intercessors, and especially the Queen of Angels, who will pray for thee now, and will obtain for thee the grace thou dost desire and need to amend thy life, and to prepare thyself for the day of judgment.

SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE SENTENCE WHICH CHRIST WILL PRONOUNCE AT
THE GENERAL JUDGMENT.

First Point.—Contemplate with the eyes of the soul and behold, as though it were present before thee, that most spacious place full of men of every condition who have flocked together to the General Judgment, and in their midst Christ on His throne of majesty, and before Him, more resplendent than the sun, His most holy cross, to serve as the most truthful balance at that just tribunal, the Queen of Angels at His side accompanied by choirs of virgins and holy women, the saints and predestined at His right hand, the angels assisting the supreme Judge as His courtiers; and the causes of all having been briefly disposed of, for they shall there be made public by the infinite wisdom and power of God, He will pronounce sentence, in the first place in favour of the good, looking at them with a loving countenance and saying, “Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat,” &c. (Matt. xxv. 34, 35). Here thou shouldst ponder the joy this sentence will produce in the hearts of the predestined, and the congratulations which the angels will offer them, and the honour and glory in which they will find themselves in presence of that assembly of men who have lived in every age of the world, and each one will be as well known to all, as though he were the only one judged on that day, the divine wisdom so ordaining it for the glory of the good and the torment of the wicked, who will rave with envy, and will curse their misfortune, seeing themselves thrown aside and insulted, their grief being increased by the glory of the blessed; and beg of our Lord grace so

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to live that thou mayst be of the number of the elect and not of that of the reprobate.

Second Point.—Consider phrase by phrase, and word by word the tenor of this sentence. “Come ye” from labour and penance, from humiliation and tribulation, to repose and honour, and to a crown of glory. “Blessed,” because now shall you partake of all the good things you can desire, and all your longings shall be most amply gratified. “Of my Father,” as His adopted children and heirs of His glory; “possess you the kingdom,” not to gaze on it and enjoy it for some time, as Adam did in Paradise, but to possess and hold it as your own eternally, because it has been “prepared for you from the beginning of the world.” Oh! happy and blessed lot! What labour or penance can be imagined, which would not be gone through with pleasure in this life, to obtain such great and endless happiness in the other? Draw from this most firm resolutions to do penance, and to follow with thy whole strength the footsteps and examples of the saints, so as to deserve afterwards to be their companion at the judgment, and to share in their glory.

Third Point.—Consider, that having pronounced sentence in favour of the good, as has been described, Christ’s countenance will from peaceful and loving become most severe and menacing; and looking on the wicked with angry eyes, and speaking to them in a terrible and severe voice, He will say to them, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry, and you gave Me not to eat,” &c. (Matt. xxv. 41, 42). Thou hast herein much on which to reflect as regards the feelings this sentence will produce in their hearts, which will be most painful and more terrible than can be described, as well as to Christ’s separation from them, by which He deprives them for ever of His sight and company, and the curse He pronounces on them and with it the complement of all the evils and miseries which can befall them. Reflect also on the fire to which He sends.

them, in which are united every kind of torment existing in hell, and on the company of the devils, which is another kind of torment in nothing inferior to those cited ; and finally on the duration of these sufferings which is not for a limited number of years, but eternal and without end or term, for ever. Consider all this deeply, and see what an end their pleasures, honour, and wealth have come to, and how the farce of this world has terminated and their torment, which will never end, commences ; and what grief and regret will they feel then, seeing at what little cost they could have changed their lot for a celestial and glorious one, and how they have lost this bliss for the sake of giving gratification to their pleasures and appetites ; and draw from this most firm resolutions to work for heaven now with all thy strength, and to gain it at any price however great it may seem, and do not neglect to consider with St. Chrysostom, that Christ here makes mention of the works of mercy which are practised towards our neighbours not because He will give His glory in recompense for them alone, but because they are the root of great good, inasmuch as our Lord gives many graces and helps to those who practise them, by means of which He guides them on their way to beatitude, whence thou shouldst conceive a great affection for this virtue of mercy, in order that through it thou mayst merit the blessing of Christ on the day of judgment.

Fourth Point.—Consider the end of that judgment, when this sentence having been delivered, Christ says the good will go into everlasting life and the wicked into everlasting punishment. Contemplate as from some elevated spot the orderly procession of that heavenly gathering of angels and men resplendently clothed, their brows encircled with garlands and crowns, with palms in their hands, accompanying Christ returning in triumph, singing hymns and canticles of praise to Him. See how the heavens open and that triumphal procession enters into glory to enjoy eternal felicity, and its members are

received by the Eternal Father, with inexpressible rejoicing and gladness, and are seated on their thrones to enjoy eternal repose ; and at the same time, turn thine eyes on the reprobate, and see how the earth opens and displays its innermost abysses, and from that volcano there burst forth furious flames and a very thick smoke which reaches to the heavens, and then that mass of damned and demons falls headlong, howling, and sending forth cries and most bitter groans, without any order or regularity, in eternal confusion ; and see how they enter into that narrow place full of stench and palpable darkness, which closes on them like a vice, crushing them mercilessly and leaving them without hope of seeing again the light of the sun, or of receiving relief in their torments. Compare the one place with the other, and the one lot with the other, and contemplate attentively the difference between that of the predestined and that of the damned, and see what it behoves thee to do now in order to obtain the former and not to fall into the latter ; and, having thought slowly over this, go a step further and return a few days later to gaze upon the world in its solitude covered with ashes, in profound silence, without a living soul on it,—heaven closed upon its blessed inhabitants, and the earth likewise closed, and in its bosom hell, with all the damned beneath a tombstone of a thousand leagues in thickness, and that this will endure thus for all eternity. See what has become of the empires, and of the grandeur and nobility and the high rank and the wealth of the powerful ! All has passed away like a shadow ; and this is the world which appears so brilliant in the eyes of mortals ! O Lord, what deceit and madness have possessed the heart of man ! Give me Thy grace that I may follow truth and despise everything to serve Thee and enjoy Thee eternally in Thy glory.

*THIRD MEDITATION.**For the Tuesday.*

ON DEATH.

First Point.—The Apostle St. Paul (Heb. ix.) declares that, as we have all to appear at the Judgment, to render an account of our lives, so also is it decreed that we all, without a single exception, have to pass first of all through death; and this is so infallible a truth that, although we know the others—of Judgment, Hell, and Heaven—by divine faith, which cannot err, this one we know by faith and by experience which shows us that we are all mortal, and that each day we are approaching death; therefore, the first point to be meditated on in this subject is the certainty of death, which is undoubted; and thou who art reading this book must infallibly die, and God sees the time, the place, and the illness in which thou hast to terminate thy life, without possibility of refusal or appeal therefrom. Think of this, and see what it befits thee to do for the short time thou hast to live, and then advance another step and meditate that, just as it is certain thou must die, so also is it that thou knowest not when nor how thou wilt die, for thou hast neither day nor hour secure; and thou hast no certainty in order that thou shouldst not reckon upon any, but be always watching, as Christ says (Matt. xxv.), and on the alert for His coming, which ordinarily occurs when we do not expect it. Consider how important it is to thee that the Lord should find thee on the alert, and beg His grace that henceforth thou mayest not neglect thyself in an affair of such great moment.

Second Point.—Consider the warning which St. Paul (Heb. ix. 27) gives that thou hast to die once only, and if this once goes wrong it is not possible to remedy it,—if thou failest in one pretension, thou mayest obtain

another, and so compensate it ; and if one action turns out ill to thee, thou canst repair it with another, but the errors of death have no remedy, nor is there any means of mending or repairing them. Think, on the one hand, how important it is to die well, since on a good death depends eternal life ; and just as God finds thee at that critical moment, so wilt thou remain for ever ; and, on the other hand, see what risks there are in death, and that very great saints, like Saint Hilary, after seventy years of solitude and penance, and Saint Arsenius, after forty, trembled to pass through that gate, and found themselves overwhelmed by the account to be rendered, and that if a mistake is made, it has no remedy, and since a good death depends on a good life, so trace out thy life in the sight of God, that it may give thee firm hope of arriving at what thou desirest, and that thou mayst have cause for joy rather than for fear.

Third Point.—Consider what it is to die,—how death is preceded by illness, which is like the battery which weakens the wall to its fall, the remedies and pains, the anguish and alarms which are undergone at that critical moment ; then, how little by little the senses give way, the eyes become dim, the ears become deaf, the taste is lost, the touch fails, the memory can recall nothing, the understanding is obscured, the heart suffers mortal pangs, and the whole man trembles and becomes cold, and his limbs stiffen as his end approaches, and finally the soul bursts the close bond which has united it all its life with the body, and he remains a corpse, cold and frozen, and he is stripped of all he possessed in this world—honours, riches, relations, friends, servants, and acquaintances, and leaves the world naked as he entered into it ; this is death, and this will befall thee ! Consider what a great mistake it is to spend the days of thy life in obtaining riches, and shortlived and perishable honours, which will so soon abandon thee, and will fail thee when thou hast the most need of them ; and beg the Lord for grace to seek those which are immortal, and to treasure up those

which are eternal and real, and which will never fail thee.

Fourth Point.—Consider what will befall thee after death. Look on thine own corpse, as senseless as a stone, so that if others do not move thee thou canst not move thyself; how then they busy themselves about burying thee and casting thee forth from thine own house. See how they enshroud thee in the oldest and poorest garment thou hast left, whilst thy relations divide all thy property amongst themselves,—how they place thee on a cloth on the ground, or, as a great honour, in a coffin,—how they cover thee with another wretched cloth, and place two or four lights on each side with a crucifix in the centre. Listen to the responses they recite for thee, and to the clanging of the bells which are rung for thee. See, then, how the priests come, and they carry thee to burial, singing litanies; and when the service is finished they lower thee into the grave in company with other corpses, and then cover thee with earth, and level it down with a wooden rammer or with a very heavy stone, and leave thee, and go to dine, and to sup, and to sleep, and to their business, and thou remainest there in that dismal and narrow chamber; and little by little they forget thee as if thou hadst not existed. And go a step further, and return to look upon thyself a week or a fortnight hence, and see what thou hast become, and thou wilt find thyself such that thou wilt not dare to look at thyself,—a mass of worms with an intolerable stench. This is thyself, and in this must thou end, and this is the foundation of all the castles in the air thou didst erect in thy mind, and for this body thou didst prepare so many pleasures, for it didst thou labour so much, this is the end and halting place of all. Study from this book,—look at thyself in this mirror, and learn therefrom to undeceive thyself in order to know the truth and to despise all that the world worships, and see what thou wouldst wish then to have done, and do now what thou wouldst wish to have done when thou shalt come to die.

*FOURTH MEDITATION.**For the Wednesday.*

ON WHAT BEFALLS THE SOUL ON LEAVING THE BODY.

First Point.—Consider how the solitary soul leaves the body and goes forth to those unknown regions unaccompanied save by its works ; so that, although it may be assisted at death by religious persons and relations, and friends, at its departure all remain here and none accompany it,—and just as we entered into the world alone, alone also shall we leave it, without any difference between the great and the lowly, the noble and the plebeian, or between the rich and the poor ; each will go accompanied by his works,—the good ones for his salvation, the bad ones to his condemnation. And the good and bad angels will also follow him to assist at the judgment God has to pass on his life, and at the account He has to demand from him of all his actions. Conclude from this how important it is for thee to treasure up good and holy works for that hour, and to shun bad works, so that they may not follow thee to condemn thee, and what devotion thou shouldest have to thy angel guardian, in order that he may then accompany, protect, and defend thee from all thy enemies, and entreat him now to guide thee on the true path to salvation.

Second Point.—Consider how at once and without further delay, the soul goes before the judgment-seat of God to render account of its whole life at His most just tribunal (this judgment, according to the most general opinion, being held in the same spot and place where each one dies, or very near thereto, between heaven and earth). Contemplate Christ on His throne as Judge, and thy soul in His presence as a criminal, and on the one side the guardian angel and the devil lower down on the other, and how they demand from thee a most minute

account of all thou hast said, thought, imagined, desired, and done in this world, without any excuses availing thee, or tears, or prayers, or grief for what thou hast done, or purposes of amendment for the future. Consider attentively how thou wilt answer God on so many charges as He will then bring against thee, for the graces He gave thee, or the inspirations He sent thee, or the opportunities of sanctification, for the good thou didst neglect to do, and for the evil thou didst, and for the tepidity and faults thou wast guilty of in thy good works, so full of dross that it is necessary to purify them by fire. Remember that Saint Bernard says of himself, that he found himself overwhelmed by the account God demanded of him in a rapture, and if so great a Saint had no answer to give to many of the charges against him, what will become of thee at that tribunal? Therefore, conclude from this meditation to arrange with God now in time the accounts of thy life, and repair the past, and beg grace and time to correct thy life and to prepare it for the judgment.

Third Point.—Consider the sentence God will pronounce on the good, and the sentence He will pronounce on the wicked. To the good He will say, Rejoice, faithful servant, and enter into the joy of thy Lord, to enjoy the reward of Thy merits. And the wicked He will cast into hell, saying, “Depart from Me, thou accursed one, to suffer in eternal flames.” See how the angels approach to carry the just soul to heaven; and Christ places him by His side, and he goes with Him triumphantly to the kingdom of His glory, full of joy at the great happiness to which he has attained. Oh! how happy he will be to have practised penance,—how he will rejoice at the alms he gave, and at the obedience and humility and other virtues he exercised, and he will consider all the past labours as well endured for the present joy and felicity. On the contrary, the wicked soul will be at once dragged away by the devils from the presence of Christ, and carried with indescribable grief to eternal

torments, lamenting his misfortune, weeping over his errors, and cursing the sensual pleasures and desires he indulged in in this world by which he has gained the pains he suffers. Deduce from this, great fear of God and very firm resolutions of living most exactly according to His holy law, of not committing one sin for the whole world, of despising everything for the good of thy soul, and banishing from thyself all that can banish thee from God.

Fourth Point.—Direct thy consideration now to what has been said in these two meditations, and contemplate attentively how different will be the deaths of the just and of sinners, for the good works in which they have spent their lives will give great confidence to the good, who hope by their death to inherit the kingdom of eternal glory, and the angels will assist them as they did the poor and suffering Lazarus in order to carry them to heaven; and as they are detached from the earth, they will not have the difficulty and grief in leaving it which distress sinners, rather they will be consoled at seeing the end of their toil and the beginning of their rest so near at hand; and on the contrary, the wicked who spent their lives in pleasures, honours, riches and pastimes, as they are so deeply rooted in the earth and foresee the bad result which awaits their trial, behold eternal torments close at hand, and the executioners rejoicing to inflict them; they will be very full of anguish, and will die in grief and rage of heart, beginning to endure in this life the torments which are to continue in the next. For which reason the Holy Ghost says, “O Death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that hath peace in his possessions” (Eccles. xli. 1); wherefore since thou necessarily hast to die and to suffer one of these two kinds of death, and one of these two lots will necessarily befall thee, to go for ever either to heaven or to hell; conclude from this meditation to sever thyself in time from everything which may attach thee to this world, and to live in it as a traveller and

as a citizen of heaven ; dying to it before thy death, and so ordering thy life, that thy death may be precious in the sight of the Lord.

FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE PAINS OF PURGATORY.

First Point.—Consider that, as faith teaches us, those souls who leave this life in the grace of God, without having completely satisfied the debt due to their sins, are condemned at the tribunal of God to make satisfaction for it in Purgatory, more or less, according to the sins they committed and the penance they did ; and the first step in this meditation, will be to behold with the eyes of contemplation a large and dark place in the interior of the earth, full of the souls of the just suffering various and severe torments ; some burning in a fierce fire with indescribable suffering ; others in frozen rivers ; others torn to pieces by the ministers of divine justice with knives of steel ; others in the direst need from hunger and burning thirst ; others attacked by vipers and serpents which are tormenting them and gnawing their entrails ; and others in the midst of other most severe and most excruciating torments, all weeping and sighing for their deliverance from that dark prison and most painful exile ; all of which should excite in thee an equal compassion for those who suffer there and a dread of coming to that place, as we will now explain.

Second Point.—Consider what passes in their hearts, for although the pains described above are much to be dreaded, the greatest of all is the privation of God and of His Glory which they suffer there ; for on the one hand

they love Him with perfect charity through the knowledge they have of His goodness, and on the other hand they desire to see and enjoy Him in proportion to their knowledge and love of Him ; and this desire is increased by the knowledge they have both of the value of His glory and of their right to it, and by the delay in its enjoyment, and by the doubt of when their exile will end, not knowing whether it will be long or short ; and the expectation of so great a good causes them such anxiety to enjoy it, and such anguish and grief at not possessing it that there is nothing in this life by which it can be described. See how persons of rank feel a short exile from their country, though they are able to carry with them their relations, and to lighten their griefs with pleasures and banquets, and amusements ; what then will those souls feel in their exile, deprived of all such alleviation and suffering at the same time the pains we have described ? If the Wise Man saith (Proverbs xiii.) that hope that is deferred afflicteth the soul, what affliction and anguish will these blessed souls suffer at the deferring of their hope ? Think over this slowly ; enter into thyself, and consider thyself in that place, and see what thou wouldst give for thy release, to free thyself from those pains and to obtain heaven, and at once resolve most firmly to make satisfaction for thy sins and not to leave it for Purgatory, where one single hour of suffering will be more severe than a hundred years of bitter penance here.

Third Point.—Consider the pains of Purgatory and their severity, and contemplate wherefore God chastises the souls of the just, whom He loves so tenderly, with such rigorous torments that the mere detention in that exile is more severe than all the tortures which can be inflicted on earth, and thou wilt find that they are suffering for a few venial sins, to which in this world no value is attained, for some frivolous little word, for some gesture or excessive mirth, for some little thought of slight importance, for a trivial irreverence committed during prayers, looking round without good cause, and

things of this nature, which amongst men are considered of no moment Who then will not be astonished that so great a God, who so loves His own, and is naturally so disposed to mercy, should chastise such slight faults with such severe punishments ! Dwell on this consideration and conclude therefrom how just God is in His judgments, since He does not overlook in His friends such small faults, tremble at the number thou hast committed in this life, and acknowledge that there is nothing which deserves to be called small if it is an offence against God, although we so call the sins which do not deprive us of His grace, but they rather deserve the name of great in regard of the Lord they offend, and of the great suffering with which God most justly chastises them, and resolve to die rather than commit the smallest venial sin.

Fourth Point.—Look back upon all that has been said, and consider the infinity of faults thou hast committed in the course of thy life, and what a debt thou hast contracted towards God thereby ; and as it is necessary to make satisfaction here or hereafter, and since now thou canst do it so easily, resolve to do worthy penance for thy sins, and to avail thyself of all the means God has given thee to make satisfaction for thy faults, such as the sacraments, alms, indulgences, and jubilees, works of mercy towards thy neighbours, and the other means the Church possesses ; and in order the better to excite thy fervour, consider that in Purgatory, although the sufferings are so severe as we have described them, the souls do not increase the amount of their merit in any degree by what they suffer ; they only pay off the debt they owe ; but here, by penance and good works done in a state of grace, satisfaction is made and merit obtained, paying on the one hand the debt due for sin, and on the other hand meriting many degrees of glory in heaven. Oh, what grief wilt thou suffer in Purgatory for not having followed this advice ! Avail thyself of it now that thou hast time, and draw likewise from this meditation great

compassion for the souls who are suffering there, hastening their freedom that God may send some one to hasten thine, and also feelings of gratitude to Almighty God for the treasure He has left us in the Church of the Blood of Christ our Lord, and the merits of the saints as satisfaction for our debts.

SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE PAINS OF HELL.

First Point.—Contemplate in the very spot in which thou standest the mouth as of a deep well, which reaches to the centre of the earth, where there is an obscure dungeon, and, as holy Job says (Job x.), “a land of misery and darkness, where the shadow of death, and no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth;” where there is neither order nor harmony, but eternal confusion; where nothing is heard but the confused outcry of tormentors and tormented, weeping, groans, howlings, blasphemings, and gnashing of teeth, imprecations and curses against God and His saints; and nothing felt but mire and an insupportable stench, a fire which burns but gives no light, intolerable choking and sobbing, without hope of a ray of light or a breath of air; so narrow, by reason of the multitude of the damned, that they can neither turn nor move; but, as Isaias says, as the tree falls so must it remain for ever. Plunge down into this depth, consider the pain of being in a place so full of torments without hope of leaving it, and draw therefrom great fear of Divine justice, and of falling into such an abyss.

Second Point.—Examine all thy senses and all the powers of thy soul, and consider how in hell each one

has its own particular torment; the eyes seeing most hideous and frightful objects, the ears hearing those groans and howlings and cries of lamentation mingled in indescribable confusion, the smell tormented by the intolerable stench, the taste embittered with the venom of dragons, the touch by all kind of pains and torments; for, as Saint Bernard says,¹ there is not on earth an ailment, however painful and excruciating it may be, which each of the damned does not suffer in hell; and thus every part and member of the body will suffer its peculiar torment, and then the memory, the understanding, the will, the imagination, and all the powers of the soul will lose their harmony, and each will suffer its torment; and as the damned will be stripped of all the clothing of virtue, and will remain without faith, without hope, and without charity, without prudence, without patience, without capability of good, from each will spring an inexplicable source of pains and tortures, without power to bear it, nor consolation nor alleviation. Judge from this the greatness of those torments, and if thou canst not bear a burning fever for two hours, or a spark which by chance falls on thy hand for a single moment, how wilt thou be able to bear so many and so great torments together and without end? Resolve firmly to mortify thy senses now, and to enter the narrow pathway of penance, so that then thou mayst not fall into the pains of hell.

Third Point.—Consider another pain common to all the damned, which theologians call the pain of loss, and which consists in the impossibility they are in of seeing and enjoying God for ever, for without doubt it is the greatest of all the pains they suffer; and just as the sight of God is the greatest of all good things, so on the contrary the deprivation of God is the greatest of all evils, and the source and root of all the sufferings of the damned in hell. A holy man was Tobias, and he said with regret (Job ii.), that he could not find any pleasure

¹ Bern. in Notabil. Docum.

in earthly things, because he could not see the light of heaven. How much more will those who will be banished from the sight of God, without hope of enjoying Him eternally, find themselves deprived of joy or contentment in anything, but rather will find therein a severe torment! Oh, what savage grief will the gnawing worm of their conscience cause them when God gives them the knowledge of what they have lost, and they see how easily they could have gained it and escaped from such terrible torments! Oh, what groans! oh, what groans! Oh, what sobs and fearful cries will they utter, but fruitlessly, for they will avail them nothing! Learn now to weep over thy sins, when thy tears are fruitful and thy groans acceptable, and await not the time when they will be of no avail.

Fourth Point.—Consider that, in addition to what has been said, each of the damned will suffer his particular torment, according to the sins he committed. Divine justice ordaining that to each one should be given the punishment in proportion to his faults, and thus the sensual lovers of pleasures will have their particular punishment for this sin, and the proud will suffer the punishment of confusion and contempt for theirs, and the gluttons, like the rich man, that of hunger and frightful thirst for their sin, and so on with all the other sins. But the duration of these punishments crowns all,—on this shouldst thou lay the stress of thy consideration, for they are such that if they were inflicted for one year it would seem a most severe punishment, and if for ten intolerable, and if for a hundred insufferable, and if for a thousand impossible to be borne; but it is not for a period of a hundred, nor of a thousand, nor of a hundred thousand years, but for an eternity without end, or term, or limit, or hope of ever ending or diminishing; and after millions of years they have to commence again with the same grief and suffering as at the beginning, without end or refreshment, or diminution, so that if every hundred thousand years one of the damned were to drop one tear

in the space between the heavens and the earth, and when he should have filled it, though so immense a space, as the water fills the bosom of the sea, his pains should finish, it would be an alleviation. For, though it exhausts the understanding to think of the time it would take, at least there would be a limit, and it would have an end ; but their sufferings will have no end, and after filling the space mentioned in the manner described, they would have to begin again, without hope of ever ending ; and after millions and millions of ages they will find themselves as much at the beginning as on the first day that they began to suffer. Ponder on this thought, and cast thine eyes over this road without a halting-place ; and this boundless, bottomless, immeasurable ocean, and see what thou wouldst not give to be saved from falling into it, and give a thousand thanks to God our Lord, because, though thou hast deserved it by thy sins, He has not already plunged thee into hell, but has given thee the opportunity of doing penance, and henceforth so do penance that thou mayest deserve to eternally enjoy His holy glory.

SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE GLORY AND REWARD OF THE JUST.

First Point.—Place before thine eyes the abode of bliss, and behold, as though it were present, that celestial court of heaven, thronged with all its courtiers, clothed in glory and splendour, divided in choirs and most glorious squadrons, arranged in admirable order and harmony. Behold the extent of that abode which no human understanding can compass ! behold its beauty superior to any-

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thing which can be imagined, for the paradise of delights which God prepared for the first man is nothing in comparison to it; for there is no imaginable pleasure or delight for the body or for the soul, which is not found there in all perfection, where God has displayed His wisdom and power, and the love He has for His elect by preparing for them a palace worthy of His greatness and liberality. All is bathed in light, without the shades of darkness ever falling thereon, nor is there any difference between day and night. There no sickness is, nor can pain ever reach there, nor sorrow, nor anything to cause grief, because all is glory, enjoyment, and sweetness in the immense goodness of God. Draw from this consideration contempt of the world, and appreciation of that heavenly Jerusalem, with lively desires of enjoying it, sparing no labour or care to obtain it.

Second Point.—Compare this abode with that of the damned, and the glory of the inhabitants of the one with the torments of those of the other, so that from the comparison of the two the excellence of the glory of the blessed may shine forth the more. Regarding the place itself, see the spaciousness, the brightness, and beauty of the one, and the narrowness, the darkness, and hideousness of the other; the society of the angels, and the society of the devils; pass in review the five senses, and see how the blessed use their sight in the contemplation of most beautiful objects and so wonderful, that the mere vision of an angel exceeds everything there is or can be in the world, whilst the damned always see most horrible, hideous and fearful things, and objects of immense horror; the saints hearken to the most sweet and soft music of the choirs of angels and of seraphims, to canticles and praises of God, and the damned hear most fearful howlings, groans, cries, blasphemies, curses without order or harmony; those in heaven enjoy most sweet odours, more so than all the aromas existing, or that can exist in the world, and on the contrary the damned endure the most terrible stench of that most vile spot; those in

heaven have a most sweet taste without hunger or thirst or anything which wearies them, but rather a greater feeling of satisfaction than if they had tasted every condiment delicate and agreeable to the palate ; and the damned are embittered with the venom of dragons, suffering always from a devouring hunger and most burning thirst ; the saints in glory have their touch tempered and gratified by eternal health, in perpetual spring and celestial temperature, without cold or heat or anything which can molest them ; and the damned burn in most devouring flames, beset by vipers and serpents and everything which can cause them torment and pain ; and further, those who are in glory have no desire which is not gratified, they enjoy perfect peace and friendship, they are all wise, prudent and amiable, and love and cherish each other most tenderly in God ; whilst those in hell are in perpetual warfare without love or friendship for one another, without knowledge or prudence or memory of anything which is not for their torment. Consider these truths and choose which of the two places suits thee best, and observe that the road to the former is by the cross and by penance, which road Christ our Redeemer trod, and the road to the latter is by the pleasures and riches of the earth, by which have gone those who are suffering there, and encourage thyself with the grace of God to abandon the wide road and to enter into the narrow pathway of virtue.

Third Point.—Consider that the glory of the blessed does not end here, for there remain to be considered the four properties enjoyed by the body of each of them, namely, brightness, subtlety, agility, and impassibility. By reason of their brightness, each will shine more than the sun, and if a single sun gives so much light to the whole world, what will so many, each more resplendent than the other, give in that most noble city ? By reason of its subtlety it will appear rather like a spirit than a body, so that nothing can prevent it from entering into or going out of where it pleases ; agility will render it so light,

that merely by its will it will go in an instant wherever it may wish ; and thus, although the place is so immense, the blessed will all see and converse and communicate intimately with each other without any difficulty ; impassibility renders them exempt from all sickness, pain, weariness or accident which could molest them, for neither can fire burn them, nor cold freeze them, nor steel wound or hurt them, but they will enjoy a well-being which cannot be lost and eternal health. The interior powers of memory, understanding, and will, will likewise be bathed in an ocean of delight, so that there is nothing they can long for or desire ; for the memory will always be dwelling on agreeable objects, and will have the past and the future before it, together with the present, so as to enjoy it all ; the understanding beholding God, as we will explain presently, and comprehending all things in Him, and the will loving Him intimately with most perfect charity. Beg grace from God to commence here what thou hast to continue hereafter and to employ all the powers of thy soul in loving Him, understanding Him, meditating and contemplating His goodness, and keeping Him always present in thy memory, as do the angels and the saints in His glory.

Fourth Point.—Consider the essential glory which the blessed enjoy, seeing God as He is in Himself, which is the source and root of all the good they enjoy, and in which consists their blessedness ; for from seeing Him, they know Him, from knowing Him, they love Him, and from loving Him, they unite themselves intimately with Him, and make themselves His image, in the way in which a crystal penetrated by the rays of the sun appears to be a sun in its beauty and splendour ; thus, St. John says : “ When He shall appear we shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is ” (1 John iii.), in love, light, and brightness. No tongue can describe the ocean of perfections and virtues which our Lord communicates to the souls of the blessed by His vision, more or less, according to the degrees of their merits ; what pleasure,

joy, contentment, satisfaction, security of never losing the happiness obtained, without the great sweetness they enjoy ever wearying them, rather always seeming new to them, and, as St. Peter says (1 Pet. i.), enjoying Him, they desire to enjoy Him, and seeing Him, they desire to see Him, for each day He becomes newer and more longed for by them; and to crown all, the duration of this glory is not for a limited number of years, nor for ages, but without limit or term, for an endless eternity. Penetrate, dive into, ponder, and contemplate this eternity, endless, endless eternity, for ever and ever, without any termination, and acknowledge how vile and insignificant and worthless is all which the world adores; abandon it all, and say with St. Peter, "Lord, it is good for us to be here" (Mark ix.); neither desire, nor seek, nor esteem, nor value ought else but God and His glory; and provided thou dost not lose this, be not solicitous about anything temporal.

EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Second Sunday of Advent.

HOW ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST, BEING IN CHAINS, SENT HIS DISCIPLES TO CHRIST.—(MATT. xi.)

First Point.—Consider how St. John, though so beloved of God for the greatness of his virtues, was a prisoner in chains and fetters, and abandoned by the world, for it is the manner of God to share His cross with His elect, and to give them troubles in this life so as to increase their crown in the next. Contemplate the patience of St. John in his chains, how he does not neglect his duties, but rather, forgetful of himself, gives all his attention to the good of his followers and the better service of God. Learn not to be faint-hearted in tribulations, but to accept them as great consolations and mercies from

God, and to avail thyself of them, to arouse thyself in His service and in the fulfilment of thy obligations.

Second Point.—Consider how St. John from his prison sent his disciples to Christ to ask Him if He was the expected Messiah, not because he did not know it, for he had publicly acknowledged Him as “The Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world,” but in order to convince them and all the people who should hear it on this occasion, that He was the true Messiah, and also to leave them a good Father and a good Master, finding His own departure from this world near at hand. Draw hence affections and desires of making known to the world the dignity and sanctity of Christ, and of drawing all men to His holy service; and in particular, those especially under thy care, eschewing the rivalries which usually exist between masters and disciples, seeking always the honour of others, as St. John the Baptist sought that of Christ.

Third Point.—Consider the reply which our Saviour gave them, rather by works than words, curing in their presence many sick, deaf, lame, blind, and lepers, and bidding them tell St. John what they had seen and heard; from which thou shouldst deduct how to defend the truth and thyself, when opinions vary as to thy life, rather by works than by words, for works speak more powerfully, and their testimony is better received; place thy hand on thy breast and consider what are thy works, and what testimony they give of thee, and beg of the Lord grace to amend thy life, and to live in such a manner that thou mayest deserve to be considered His disciple.

Fourth Point.—Consider what the Evangelist St. Matthew says, that when the disciples of St. John went back to carry the answer to their master, Christ began to speak many praises of St. John, just as others are accustomed to occupy themselves in speaking evil of those who have their backs turned; and Christ said of him that he was an angel and a prophet, and more than

a prophet, by the angelic virtues which adorned his soul. Learn, therefore, first to speak well of thy neighbours in their presence and in their absence, and beg of God grace to speak ill of no one; and secondly, conceive a high esteem for St. John, seeing how great was that borne towards him by Christ when He thus published his sanctity to the people; see how Christ repays the services done Him, since for that which St. John rendered Him in sending his disciples to Him, He gave him in this life such high praises, and thereby did him such honour as no one else ever obtained, and afterwards conferred on him most abundant rewards in eternal life.

NINTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE DECREE OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY CONCERNING
THE INCARNATION OF THE DIVINE WORD.

First Point.—Consider the whole human race, through the sin of our first father Adam, banished from Paradise and from heaven for so many thousands of years, and not only banished to this valley of miseries, but captive and bound in the chains of sin, and so vast a number of souls falling each day into hell, and the gate of heaven closed to all the sons of Adam; and contemplate the most Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, without having any need of man, their glory requiring not for the increase of their glory that he should partake thereof, but solely through their infinite pity and mercy, occupied themselves with his redemption and the opening to him of the gates of heaven; and finally decreed his remedy and the end of so many evils.

Second Point.—Consider that the angels sinned and were hurled from heaven, and God had no mercy on them,

nor occupied Himself about their redemption, but He had mercy on men, amongst whom thou art included. Ponder on the great mercy God has shown thee,—acknowledge how much thou dost owe Him, and see what services the angels would have rendered Him if He had granted to them a similar favour, making Himself an angel for their salvation, and to rescue them from hell and bring them back to that most blissful state they lost, and give Him infinite thanks for the favour He did thee in grieving over thy misery, in remedying thy evils and opening to thee the gates of heaven ; and learn also to have mercy on thy brethren when thou seest them in the sufferings of poverty, exile, prisons, and sickness, and to labour for their relief.

Third Point.—Consider the decree that went forth from the council of the Most Holy Trinity, that the Second Person, who is the Eternal Word, Son of the Eternal Father, and equal to Him in all things, should become man, clothing Himself in the same flesh as Adam ; and that He should come into the world in the habit of a servant to redeem man with His blood, and open to him the gates of heaven with the key of the cross. All Three Persons made this decree, and the Son executed it with the greatest willingness, displaying thus His infinite charity. Ponder how, it being so easy to send an angel to ransom man, or to take other means less costly, He would not effect this ransom save by His own person and at such a cost to Himself, clothing Himself in the livery of him who was His enemy, and who had offended Him so grievously. O Lord, who would not be astonished at Thy infinite goodness ? Who can comprehend Thy great mercy ? Oh ! what tongue can worthily celebrate Thy infinite love, and the pity Thou hadst for man, when he offended Thee most and deserved it least ? May the seraphim and cherubim, and all the choirs of angels, and all men, and all creatures praise Thee, and since I have not wherewith to praise Thee as I ought for such great mercy as Thou hast shown me, I offer Thee the praises which they all render Thee.

Fourth Point.—Consider the object of the Most Holy Trinity in this decree, which was, as St. John says, “That whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but have life everlasting” (John iii. 15); and as St. Augustine says, “God made Himself man to make man God.” Thus shouldst thou show thy gratitude to Him; see if thou lovest Him as He loved thee, whether thou dost earn redemption, seeking it through His grace, and whether thou dost aspire to imitate Him in all thy works; enter into account with thyself, observe what an obligation so singular a favour has laid thee under, and beg of Him earnestly that the decree of His redemption may be fruitful in thee, and that thou mayst not be so unfortunate, after He descended for thee into the world and opened for thee by His blood the gates of heaven, as to remain outside and fall into the dungeon of hell, whilst so many others are saved by His merits; use the saints as intercessors, and especially the most Blessed Virgin, for she will assist thee to obtain this great blessing.

TENTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE VALUE OF THIS DECREE AND THE MOTIVES WHICH
INDUCED GOD TO MAKE IT.

First Point.—Consider the exalted rank and the sovereign nature of the Giver, and of the gift He offers, and the lowliness and humility of the person on whom He bestows it; for, as St. John says, the Giver is God, the Eternal Father, who so loved the world as to give His only Son for its redemption; and thus both on account of the Giver and on account of the gift bestowed, is it the greatest and most exalted possible, and the

value and estimation of His liberality is yet further increased by the lowliness and insignificance of the person on whom He confers it, namely, man, a vile worm of nature, dust and ashes, and a source of miseries, and who of his own initiative has not virtue for any good work but only for bad deeds and sins, for ignorance and offences against his God. Ponder attentively on what God is and what man is, and especially on what thou art, and see and contemplate that God had thee present before His mind when He made that decree for thy redemption, and to save thee from hell, and be thou enkindled with lively flames of love and gratitude to so good a God, who gave thee His own Son, when thou didst least deserve it, that He might redeem thee and deliver thee from the prison of sin, and the captivity of Satan, and think what services thou shouldst render Him in return for so great a mercy, and grieve with thy whole heart at having offended Him whom thou hast so much reason to serve.

Second Point.—Consider the sin of the angels, how God created them so adorned with every gift and virtue, both natural and supernatural, and for only one bad thought of pride and disobedience to His most holy will which they entertained, He hurled them instantly from heaven to hell, without giving them an opportunity of repentance, closing against them completely the gate of His mercy, without leaving them hope of a remedy, for ever and ever; and ponder that if in the angels, as holy Job says, “He found wickedness” (Job iv.) and He pardoned them not, how much more will He find it in thee who art frail earth? And if for a single bad thought He wrought such justice on them, what will be that which He will do in thee for so many evil thoughts and for so many wicked words and perverse actions as thou hast been guilty of in the course of thy life? Pause, then, and contemplate the mercy God has done thee in coming to redeem thee, and in giving thee His only begotten Son for thy Saviour, in waiting for thee to repent and

granting thee graces for that purpose, and consider how thou shouldst amend thy life.

Third Point.—Consider the motives that God had for making this decree, which were—1st, His infinite pity, as has been said ; 2dly, the weakness of man conceived in sin, and without strength or virtue wherewith to rise therefrom ; 3dly, because the fall of man into sin was by the seduction of the devil, which was not the case with the angel, whose sin proceeded from his own malice, who, after having received such great gifts from God, was ungrateful and regardless of them, wherefore in punishment for his ingratitude he was left in his sin. Take warning from his example, and consider that to whom more is given, from him more is required. Enter into account with thyself, see the mercies thou hast received from the hand of God, and how ill thou hast served Him, and take heart to serve Him anew that He may not leave thee in thy sin.

Fourth Point.—Consider how, as St. Bernard says, another of the motives God had for making this decree and coming to redeem man was, that man is His image and the work of His own hands, which Satan endeavoured to destroy for the envy he had of his good, and in order to stand up against God and offend Him, and the Lord Himself took into His own hands to come forward to the defence and renovate the image which He had stamped on man ; from which we should draw great confidence in His goodness that He will defend us from the frauds and temptations of the devil ; for if thou dost not fall away from God, He will not abandon thee in thy many battles, but will protect the work of His hands. Prostrate thyself at His feet with profound humility, and expose to Him on the one hand thy weakness, and on the other the astuteness and obstinacy of His enemy. Beg of God to defend thee with His mighty hand, since thou art its work and made to His image and likeness, and be confident of victory through the divine favour.

*ELEVENTH MEDITATION.**For the Wednesday.*ON THE CHOICE MADE OF OUR LADY TO BE THE MOTHER OF
THE ETERNAL WORD.

First Point.—Consider how the most Holy Trinity having decreed to redeem man by the Incarnation, the Eternal Word chose to be born of woman as other men; and although by a more perfect means and one apparently more conformable to His dignity, God might well have made for Him a perfect body as He did for Adam, to which He could have united Himself hypostatically elevating it thus to the Divinity, without being born of woman, yet He would not take this means, but chose to be conceived and born of a Virgin in order to do greater honour to human nature, by making a man God, and a woman His Mother, as well as to be thus more like unto other men, beginning from the time of His conception to endure the narrowness of that dwelling for nine months, and to be born a little one exposed to the inclemencies of the weather and subject to a woman as His Mother; in which thou hast great cause for gratitude, and to learn not to seek exceptions, to suffer readily for His love, and to submit thy will to that of other men.

Second Point.—Consider that God also chose to be born of woman, in order that as our perdition was begun by a man and woman, our redemption also should spring from another man and another woman, who should in a certain manner assist in it by giving a body to the Redeemer, that thus the remedy should correspond to the evil and the reparation to the sin; from which draw what manner of reparation thou shouldst make for thine, endeavouring with all thy strength to satisfy for thy sins to the utmost of thy power with due and proportionate penance, doing such works as to merit their forgiveness.

Third Point.—Consider the election which for this purpose was made of the most Holy Virgin. How God, looking through all ages, past, present and future, chose this most pure and Holy Lady, adorning her with most high virtues as became a Queen and Virgin, who was to be His Mother. Here contemplate the Divine Providence preparing from all eternity the means of our redemption, and excellence of this Blessed Lady chosen to be the Mother of God, and rejoice to have such a Mother, for she is also the Mother of sinners; and acquire great confidence in God that His mercy will be manifested towards thee, and that His Divine Providence will remedy thy sins and alleviate all thy labours.

Fourth Point.—Consider that, as the Apostle says, "God accepteth not the person of man" (Gal. ii.), but in one side of the balance He places the burthen and in the other the graces and assistance to the bearing of it; and thus He decreed from the first for this Queen of Heaven that which was necessary for so high an office as was that of His Mother, determining to enrich her with all the graces, prerogatives, and virtues requisite for so elevated a dignity; from which thou shouldst draw great confidence in the Divine mercy and providence that thou wilt receive the aids and graces necessary to thee in the position in which God's Providence may place thee, and for the execution of those things He may command thee, and great courage for all that is of His service, confiding in His grace in which thou canst do all things, but without which thou art powerless.

TWELFTH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE MOST IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF OUR BLESSED
LADY.

First Point.—Consider how the Eternal Word having determined to become man, to honour human nature and to create the Blessed Virgin to be His Mother, wrought, as St. Ambrose tells us, the material in which He was to clothe Himself, out of the lineage of Abraham and David, adorning it and enriching it with so many and such holy progenitors full of heroic virtue, beginning thus so many centuries beforehand to prepare the dwelling which He was to inhabit, and to combine the elements of which His body was to be formed: from which thou shouldst learn what preparation is required in the soul in order to receive God worthily, and that none is excessive for the greatness of so exalted a host, and for how long a time and how carefully thou shouldst dispose thyself to receive Him into thy poor abode, and beg of our Lord His grace thereunto, and that as He disposed for Himself a fit dwelling-place in the most Holy Virgin, so also He may prepare thee and render thee worthy to receive Him.

Second Point.—Consider by what virtues St. Joachim and St. Ann were prevented to make them worthy to be the parents of such a daughter, which were high sanctity and profound piety, chastity and patience, being afflicted during many years with the slur of sterility, which amongst their people was a dishonour and a reproach; God, as St. Jerome tells us, seasoning as it were with these afflictions and disasters the flesh with which He was to clothe Himself, as the most precious skins are tanned by the inclemencies of the weather; and learn to have patience in the sufferings that God sends thee,

persuading thyself that they are tokens of His love with which He would mould and dispose thee for the reception of His favours : humble thyself in His presence and give Him many thanks for them, holding and esteeming them as graces from His divine hand, submitting thyself to His divine will, and begging that it may be perfectly done in thee on earth as it is in heaven.

Third Point.—Consider how in the conception of the most pure Virgin grace forestalled sin and preserved her from every stain, for it was not just that a taint should rest on the flesh of which God was to be formed, nor on the house that He was to inhabit, nor on her whom He was to have for His Mother. He therefore enriched her from the beginning with so many and such heroic virtues, that He might derive honour from His Mother on earth as He derived honour from His Father in heaven. Exult at her glory, and give her a thousand congratulations for her greatness and dignity ; rejoice to have such a Mistress and Queen ; contemplate the joy of the angels and the congratulations they offered her in the first moment of her conception ; accompany them with great devotion, and offer thyself with them to serve and reverence her.

Fourth Point.—Consider on the one hand with what hatred God looks on sin, since He permitted not the least shadow of it to fall on His most holy Mother, and see how thou shouldst abominate it and endeavour with all thy might to prevent its stain from falling on thee ; and on the other contemplate the thanks which this most pure Virgin from the first gave to her Creator for the favours she received from His hands, and how from the first instant of her life until the last she ceased not to praise, serve, love, and reverence Him, ever growing in sanctity, ever increasing the wealth of her virtues without interruption or tepidity, ever travelling from virtue to virtue unto the highest possible perfection.

*THIRTEENTH MEDITATION.**For the Friday.*

ON THE NATIVITY OF THE MOST HOLY MARY OUR LADY.

First Point.—Consider how Divine Providence disposed that the parents of the Blessed Virgin should be aged and sterile, because she was to be rather the child of grace than of nature, as becomes one whom God chooses by an especial grace for His service. Consider the long-tried desires of those servants of God, and how He deferred this favour to the last stage of their lives, and then, when they could least expect it, they received it from His hands, for God sells favours at the price of lamentations, clamours, prayers, hopes, and desires; learn to be patient and to hope, and thine shall not remain unheeded; if God delays their fulfilment, it is in order to render thee more worthy of His favours, by patience and confidence in His bounty and mercy, and when thou art most incapable of obtaining them by human power, thou shalt receive them from His hand as did the holy parents of the most pure Virgin.

Second Point.—Consider the joy and delight of heaven and earth at the birth of this celestial Lady, for the most holy Trinity took especial pleasure in this divine Princess: the Eternal Father because she was His Daughter, the Son because she was to be His Mother, and the Holy Ghost because she was His Spouse. The angels rejoiced and revered her as their Queen, and men as their Mistress; and her parents especially were most cordially delighted at seeing themselves honoured and enriched with a treasure of such value, and as their desires had been so great, so likewise was the joy with which they received her; and as the Church sings, the birth of this Virgin brought joy to the whole universe. Do not thou alone remain indifferent, but rejoice to have such a Mis-

tress, such a Queen, such a Mother and patroness with God. Enter that house in the company of the angels, and congratulate the Eternal Father on having such a Daughter, the Son such a Mother, the Holy Ghost such a Spouse ; congratulate the angels on their Queen, men on their Mistress, the pious parents on having such a Daughter, better than many sons and the whole world, for the dawn has come which shall dissipate its darkness. Congratulate also the Blessed Virgin herself for having come into the world to be its remedy ; and beg of her to be born in thy soul by devotion, affection, and grace, and to be always thy patroness and protectrice before God.

Third Point.—Contemplate the graces and prerogatives which accompanied the birth of her who was to be the worthy Mother of God ; for, in the first place, as St. John Damascene tells us, she caused her mother no suffering as other children do at their birth, but only great joy and delight, as one who came to bring joy to the whole world, and her face shone at her birth like the sun, and bathed all present with a most beautiful light, causing at the same time devotion in their souls whilst her own was enriched by the Holy Ghost with all graces and virtue, and her most pure body with all the gifts requisite for so high a dignity as that of Mother of God, for, as Saint Bonaventure says, He adorned the abode of the Eternal Word, that it might be a fit dwelling-place for Him. God prepared the heavens, so beautiful and full of delights for His footstool, and to be the abode of the blessed ; the earth He formed with its fruits and fertility for the habitation of men, and the Holy Ghost adorned the most Blessed Virgin with all the gifts and graces of which a pure creature was capable, that she might be the most worthy dwelling of the Eternal Word, and the distance which separates the Son of God from angels and men is, according to our opinion, the measure of the exaltation of this abode in Mary over the heavens and the earth, and all that is precious in them. Draw thence affectionous of joy and exultation that this celestial empress

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should be so holy, so sublime, and so adorned, and that, on the day of her birth, she should have begun where the greatest saints ended, and that this house of God should be built on the mountain of the highest sanctity that exists in the Church. Note what manner of holiness is required for a worthy dwelling-place for the Lord, and beg of the Holy Spirit that, as He adorned the Blessed Virgin, so He will adorn and prepare thy dwelling in order that thou mayest be worthy to receive Him into it.

Fourth Point.—Consider that if God enriched the Blessed Virgin with so many gifts and graces above all the saints, it was in order that we should venerate, love, and serve her more than all others; and therefore thou shouldst bear her more cordial love and devotion than to all the saints of the Church, and dedicate thyself henceforth to her service. Place thy hand on thy breast and consider how ungrateful thou hast been for her benefits, and now with what lukewarmness thou dost serve her; weep over thy tepidity and indolence, and offer thyself, although unworthy to serve her, to be her slave from this day. Beg her pardon for thy past faults, and cease not to venerate and serve her and pray to her, compensating in what remains to thee of life for what thou hast neglected in the past.

FOURTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE NAME OF OUR LADY.

First Point.—Consider how, according to the custom of the Jews, when the eight days were accomplished, she received the name of Mary, name given by the hand of the Most High, and full of mystery from the various

significations it has. And first consider that, as St. Bernard says,¹ this name of Mary signifies star of the sea, because the Blessed Virgin was born to be the star and guide of the Church, towards whom all those that navigate the sea of this world to the port of bliss should look and direct themselves if they would reach it, and not be submerged by the tempests which continually arise and threaten the vessels of our navigation ; from which thou shouldst draw, as the same St. Bernard tells us, not to turn thine eyes away or lose sight of this star if thou wouldst make a successful and prosperous voyage in thy journey to heaven. Choose her for thy guide and beg of her to teach thee the road thou shouldst follow ; have her before thine eyes in all thy actions, and endeavour to imitate her virtues, and she will enlighten and assist thee with the celestial influences of her grace.

Second Point.—Contemplate that, as St. Bonaventure says,² this name of Mary signifies bitter sea,—sea on account of the immensity of graces that she received, and bitter on account of the many sorrows she endured in this world, until she reached the port of glory, it being verified in the Mother as in the Son, that it behoved them to suffer, that they might enter into glory ; and this being so, contemplate how much the Blessed Virgin suffered from her birth to her assumption into heaven, for even, had she only suffered the banishment from Him whom she so tenderly loved, that alone were matter of great grief ; and dispose thyself to suffer in imitation of her, if thou wouldst enter with her into glory : offer thyself heartily to her service and companionship ; persuade thyself that thou must pass the bitter sea of labours if thou wouldst reach the port of rest and bliss.

Third Point.—Consider that this glorious name of Mary signifies mistress, not only because she is mistress of angels and of men, but much more, because she was mistress over herself, submitting all her passions and

¹ Bern. Sermon. ii. Super missus est.

² Bonav. In Spec. c. 5.

appetites to reason, and to the Will of the Most High, in which thou shouldst imitate her, if thou wouldst be her companion in the crown of glory, subjecting thy inclinations to reason and thy will to that of God, endeavouring with courageous mortification that thy soul should be master of thy body and be itself subject and conformed to His holy law. Beg of her protection and grace for this, and to communicate to thee one spark of that fire which burned in her breast to stimulate thee in the service of God and in imitation of her.

Fourth Point.—Consider with how much reason the Church sings of Mary that she reversed Eve's name, for Eve yielded to the serpent, and Mary conquered him, and placed her foot on his head; Eve gave way to her appetites, whilst Mary governed hers, and held them in restraint, and subject to the Spirit. Eve fell as weak, Mary conquered as strong. Eve earned death for us, and Mary purchased us life; Eve gave us the deadly fruit, and Mary the healthful fruit of life; Eve was the mother of sin, the cause of our banishment, and of infinite miseries to us, and Mary Most Holy is the Mother of grace, Mother of mercy, and gate of Paradise. Eve provoked the anger of God against us, and Mary inclines Him to pity and mercy. Eve lost grace for us, Mary restores it to us by means of her intercession, reconciling us with God. Eve was the dishonour of women, and Mary does them honour, as likewise to the whole human race; through Eve the malediction of God fell upon us, and through Mary His blessing. Contemplate these truths, and cry out with thy whole heart and say with cordial affection born of the esteem and gratitude thou owest her: O Virgin, most holy and most pure, blessed art thou amongst women, to thee do we owe in great part the restoration of our good; O Sovereign Empress, star of our navigation, our guide by the road, light which expels darkness, illuminate my soul and fortify my spirit, that I may follow thy footsteps and abandon those of the first Eve: grant me thy protection, that I

may despise all earthly things, love and seek after those that are heavenly, and serve thy Most Blessed Son for ever and ever. Amen.

FIFTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Third Sunday in Advent.

ON THE EMBASSY SENT BY THE HIGH PRIEST FROM JERUSALEM TO ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST.—(JOHN i. 20).

The Gospel tells us that the authorities of Jerusalem, moved by the reputation and credit that St. John had gained by means of his life and preaching, sent to inquire whether he was the Messiah that was expected, and he answered, that he was neither the Messiah, nor Elias, nor any one of the prophets, but the voice of God crying in the desert, warning all to prepare the way of the Lord, as was prophesied by Isaias.

First Point.—Consider the credit that virtue brings to those that practise it, and the honour it earns for the good, since even their greatest enemies respect and esteem them so much for it, as the authorities of Jerusalem did St. John, whom, on account of his great sanctity, they mistook for Christ, the Messiah that was to come to redeem the world. Ponder how mistaken men are, in seeking by human means the vain honours of this world, which are but a breath, and yet are so difficult to obtain; and resolve most firmly to seek true honour, such as St. John acquired, which is won by virtue and sanctity of life.

Second Point.—Consider that the devil, envious of the sanctity of St. John, and of the fruits he obtained in souls by his preaching and doctrine, conceived and brought about this snare to overthrow him by vanity, offering him the highest dignity in the world; and it is

credible that, had he accepted it, he would have been decried as vain, false, and proud, for calling himself the Christ and Messiah when he was not so ; for the priests who spoke to him on behalf of the senate knew, as learned men, that St. John was of the tribe of Levi, and that the Christ was to be of the tribe of Juda, so that he could not be the Messiah : from which draw great light by which to recognise and avoid the astute wiles of Satan, who ever seeks thy ruin, and hold the honours of this world and the dignities of the age to be enemies of thy good, for they are as bait which the devil offers to make thee fall into his net of pride and cast thee into hell.

Third Point.—Consider the great humility of St. John, and how firmly he maintained the truth, answering with so much sincerity and resolution that he was not the Christ, nor Elias, nor one of the prophets, when he might, with truth, have said that he was such in spirit, in the same sense as Christ affirmed it of him ; but he rather depreciated himself, saying he was a voice, and making of himself only a tongue to utter praises of the Saviour : in which thou hast much to learn and to imitate, in the contempt of honours as well as of thyself, learning to despise thyself and to honour others, and speak favourably of them, as St. John did of Christ.

Fourth Point.—Ponder how quickly these messengers changed their attitude and turned against the Baptist, reprehending him and reviling him because he baptized, without being Christ, by which they showed that they came moved rather by envy than esteem ; and recognise how little trust can be placed in the honours men offer, which are so deceitful, false, and shortlived, that they hardly exist before they are no more, and beg of God grace to despise the world and seek eternal goods and His holy service, in which consist, as has already been said, true honour, and the happiness of the soul, which has no end.

*SIXTEENTH MEDITATION.**For the Monday.*

ON THE PRESENTATION OF OUR LADY IN THE TEMPLE.

First Point.—Consider the fervour with which the parents of the most Holy Virgin offered her to God in the Temple at the age of three years in fulfilment of the vow they had made before receiving her from the hand of the Lord, returning with greatest fidelity that most precious gift which He had given them, and depriving themselves for His love of that priceless jewel which was the delight of their souls; from which thou shouldst learn to be faithful towards God in keeping steadfastly thy good resolutions, and to show thyself grateful for the mercies He does thee by fulfilling thy vows and the promises thou dost make Him with all fervour and diligence, even though it be necessary therefore to deprive thyself of what thou lovest most. Contemplate at leisure what passed in the interior of the souls of those holy parents of the Blessed Virgin, when offering this holocaust, the grief they felt at leaving that jewel which they so loved, and which was the joy of their house, the fervour with which they overcame that feeling, the Divine love which burnt in their hearts which obliged them to make that offering, the will so submissive to that of God, with which they made it the sweet tears which flowed from their eyes when taking farewell of her with their last embrace. Ruminates this honeycomb of devotion, and derive thence copious fruit for thy soul of affections and desires to deprive thyself, for the love of God, of whatever thou greatly lovest, postponing always thy interest to His service and thy will to the Divine.

Second Point.—Consider how the parents of the most Blessed Virgin offered her to God at so tender an age, preferring the spiritual advantage of their daughter to

their own consolation, and see how important it is to prefer always spiritual to temporal goods, and for parents not to deprive their children of what is for the good of their souls for the sake of personal comfort, but rather after the example of the parents of our Lady to seek to dedicate them from childhood to the service of the Lord, and to bring them up in the holy fear of God.

Third Point.—Consider that, as Josephus tells us,¹ there was a flight of stairs in the Temple of fifteen steps by which to ascend to the department and habitations of the virgins and widows dedicated to the service of the altar. This the Queen of Heaven ascended at so tender an age, bidding farewell to her parents with fortitude and courage, and reached the highest step, where, as Saint Jerome tells us, she was received by Zachary, father of St. John the Baptist, in his sacerdotal vestments, passing thus as it were from the hands of her parents into those of God. Contemplate the fervour of this Virgin, the ardent love of God that burned in her breast, the resolution with which at so early an age she consecrated herself to God as a holocaust, reserving nothing of herself, for herself, offering her soul, her body, her purity, her heart, her senses, and all the powers of her soul to serve Him eternally; and beg of God grace to copy in thy soul so many and such heroic virtues as this most pure Virgin teaches thee.

Fourth Point.—Raise thine eyes to heaven and contemplate how the most Holy Trinity and all the heavenly court accepted this agreeable sacrifice of Mary, for if, as Scripture says, "The Lord had respect to Abel and to his offerings" (Gen. iv. 4), and that he received them in an odour of sweetness, with how much more reason must He not have looked with complacency on that of the most Holy Mary who was so much more holy than Abel, and the sacrifice she offered being of so incomparably greater value. The angels were bathed in a new joy on that day, and the whole of the heavens enjoyed renewed

¹ Joseph. lib. vi. De Bello Judaic.

delights. The most Holy Trinity poured out the treasure of its graces into the soul of the most Blessed Virgin, who found herself inundated with joy and ineffable sweetness; for thus does God repay those who offer themselves to Him with their whole heart. Imitate thou her example, and offer thyself a holocaust to God with thy whole heart, if thou wouldst receive the like gifts and graces from His mighty hand.

SEVENTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE LIFE THAT OUR BLESSED LADY LED IN THE
TEMPLE.

First Point.—Consider how great was the love of purity in the Blessed Virgin Mary, since, as the Church says, alone and without the example of another, she consecrated herself to God by a vow; and in order to keep it more perfectly she shut herself up in the Temple in the company of virgins, separating herself thus from the dangers of the world, although she was secure from falling into them. From which draw great appreciation of this virtue, and a firm resolution to avoid all occasions of falling and staining thy purity. Raise thy heart to this most pure Virgin, and ask her to hold out her hand to thee that thou mayest follow in her footsteps and guard perfectly the purity of thy soul.

Second Point.—Consider, with St. Bonaventure,¹ how the first care of this Lady in the Temple was not to neglect prayer and familiar intercourse with God. Here thou hast three points to meditate,—1st, what were her relations with God; 2d, with herself; 3d, with her neighbours. Those with God consisted in praying continually

¹ S. Bonav. Med. iii. De Vit. Christ.

in the Holy of Holies, where, St. Jerome tells us,¹ she was admitted by an especial privilege of the priests ; and there she spent nights and days in contemplation of the Divine mysteries and in most sweet converse with God, from which she desisted not all day, for, whilst her hands worked, her heart was with God, whose love burned continually on the altar of her soul, inflaming her unceasingly with its great fervour. Endeavour to imitate always this love and fervour, giving thyself up to prayer, and not allowing thy mind to wander from God.

Third Point.—Consider what were the relations of the most Holy Virgin with herself in the Temple ; contemplate slowly the virtues she exercised, her recollection, her silence, her humility, her most exact obedience not only to the priests of the Temple but also to her mistresses, her poverty, making God her only treasure, her mortification and penance, of which St. Gregory of Tours² tells us that her bed was a bare plank, that she fasted continuously, and wore always a hair shirt, macerating her tender flesh with vigorous penance : there she learned the Divine law and occupied herself in working in wool and linen, and in making the cloths for the service of the Temple. Contemplate the life of this sovereign Lady, and take it for a model of thine, and beg of God, by her merits, to grant thee grace to imitate her virtues.

Fourth Point.—Consider what were her relations with her neighbours, since, as St. Jerome tells us, there burned in her breast a sacred fire of charity towards all ; none needed her help, but she was ready to serve them ; she loved all equally, and showed to all by her actions the road to heaven : she was an angel of peace amongst her sisters and companions, her words were as honeycombs of sweetest devotion ; she was never idle, and when saluted she answered with thanksgiving to God, in order not to cease one moment from praising Him. The food that was given her she distributed to the poor, being herself

¹ Hieron. De Ort. Mar.

² Gregor. Turon. apud Fr. Franc. Xim. de Vita Christi.

sustained by Divine Providence ; she prayed always for her neighbours and for the good of the whole universe. Such was the manner of life of the Blessed Virgin in the Temple, and such is the pattern of perfection which she has left us. See thyself in this mirror before God, and beg of Him grace to copy her virtues in thy soul and to become a living image of her perfection.

EIGHTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE ESPOUSALS OF OUR LADY WITH THE GLORIOUS
ST. JOSEPH.

First Point.—Consider how, as St. Jerome affirms,¹ when the Blessed Virgin had completed her fourteenth year, the priests occupied themselves in giving her a husband, according to the custom of that people ; and knowing that she had made the vow of virginity (a thing unheard of till then) they consulted God, and by His ordinance lot was cast amongst the men of her tribe for the choice of a spouse ; and the lot fell to St. Joseph, the wand he carried in his hand flowering, and the Holy Ghost, in the form of a dove, descending upon it ; in all which there is much to meditate and to learn. First, the vow of the most Blessed Virgin, who for the love of purity hesitated not to incur the stigma of sterility, which was a brand of infamy amongst that people, in order that thou mayest not hesitate to suffer any affront for the love of virtue. Secondly, the priests consulting God teach us to recur to Him in all our doubts ; next, the drawing of lots for the spouse of Mary, shows us that his patronage and devotion are gifts of the hand of the Most High ; and the

¹ Hier. De Ort. Mar.

flowering of his wand, shows how he that is chosen for her especial servant should put forth flowers of many virtues. Meditate all this leisurely, and animate thyself to the acquiring of the heroic virtues which shine forth in this mystery, at the cost of whatever care, diligence, or labour.

Second Point.—Consider the virtues exercised by the most pure Virgin in this act of her espousals, and especially the faith and confidence in God manifested by her, in believing that by a means so contrary to virginity as is matrimony, hers was to be preserved, as it was preserved and increased by her most chaste life with the glorious St. Joseph, for nothing is impossible to God: take courage from her example to confide in the Lord in the undertakings He imposes on thee, however arduous they may be, believing that His mighty hand will bring thee triumphantly through them all.

Third Point.—Consider the obedience of the most Holy Virgin in a matter so difficult and contrary to her intention, her silence, her humility, and the submission with which she obeyed the priests when they ordered her to give her hand to St. Joseph notwithstanding her vow of virginity; and learn thou also to obey God, and the men who govern in His stead, with all promptitude and submission as the Blessed Virgin did, even though they command thee to leave what appears to be the path of greater perfection, and confiding in the goodness of God, that He will order all things for His own greater glory and the food of thy soul.

Fourth Point.—Contemplate how Divine Providence chose St. Joseph, poor of all temporal goods, but very rich in spiritual ones, humble in the eyes of men, but great in those of God, because, in His sight, virtue is preferred to all the wealth and honours of the world. See the modesty and timidity with which the two spouses gaze on each other, their tongues are silent but their hearts speak; see how St. Joseph puts out his hand to place the ring of betrothal on the finger of the Blessed

Virgin, and with what virginal bashfulness she receives it; observe the devotion of both, and the admiration of all present; raise thine eyes to heaven and see the blessing that God bestows on these two holy spouses, and how the angels and all the heavenly court celebrate these most chaste nuptials; witness the reciprocal donation each makes to the other, of heart and mind, binding themselves together, with the bond of most chaste love; raise thy heart to God and beg of Him one drop of devotion wherewith to honour this holy pair whilst assisting at the celebration of their wedding; congratulate them and beg of them to admit thee to their service, to be for ever their servant and slave.

NINETEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE ANNUNCIATION OF MARY OUR MOST HOLY LADY.

First Point.—Consider, who sends this embassy? To whom? and for what? It is God Almighty who sends it; she to whom He sends it is a virgin most pure and holy, retired and hidden in the little town of Nazareth; it is sent in order to obtain her consent to His clothing Himself in her most pure womb, with the rough garment of our flesh; for oftentimes does God await our will and desire in order to do us the greatest favours: he who brings this message is an angel, one of the highest princes of heaven, and he comes to the Blessed Virgin when espoused to St. Joseph, in order that she may be, not only Virgin in body but also in fame of holiness and good repute: he arrived at the moment when, as St. Bonaventure says,¹ she was in highest contemplation, begging of God to shorten the delay, and to send the desired Messiah for the redemp-

¹ Bonav. Med. iii. De Viti Christi.

tion of the world, in which thou hast much to learn; and first draw from this point, a high esteem for prayer and resolutions to exercise thyself therein, seeing the great favours obtained therein by the Queen of Heaven; draw also love of recollection and of retirement from men, which is the means to be more intimate and familiar with God; learn to guard thy good name, of which the Wise Man tells us, that it is "More than a thousand treasures, precious and great" (Eccles. xli. 15); and, above all, learn to esteem virtue, since because of its possession was this most holy maiden chosen for the Mother of God from amongst so many, as there then were in the world, of exalted greatness and majesty in the eyes of men.

Second Point.—Gaze with the eyes of thy soul on this holy Virgin in the retirement of her chamber, rapt in highest contemplation, and the archangel Gabriel, prostrate on the ground, in deepest reverence on the opposite side of the apartment, and the whole celestial court watching with joy and jubilation for the approach of the hour when the vacant thrones in their midst were to be filled by the redemption of mankind. Listen attentively to the words of the angel, and meditate them one by one, drawing sweetness from them as from a honeycomb, for the profit of thy soul: "Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum, benedicta tu in mulieribus,"—"Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou amongst women,"—for each word contains profound mysteries of doctrine and devotion.

Third Point.—Consider how the Blessed Virgin was troubled, not at seeing or hearing the angel, for she was accustomed to treat familiarly with angels, but at hearing herself praised, and at being told that she was to bear a son, because her humility and the low esteem in which she held herself did not allow her to think or believe anything honourable concerning herself, and her extreme purity compelled her to disown any the least shadow or imagination incompatible with it. O purest of Virgins,

who couldst not endure praises even from the mouth of an archangel, or to hear one word in dissonance with thy most chaste intentions, may all the seraphim and all creatures extol thy sanctity, thy humility, thy purity, which surpasses that of the heavens themselves ! Oh, obtain for us grace to imitate it, to follow thee and to despise all the honours, dignities, and greatness of the world for the love of virtue !

Fourth Point.—Consider how the archangel consoled her by intimating to her that such was the Will of God, and assuring her that it was by the virtue of the Most High and the co-operation of the Holy Ghost that so great a mystery was to be accomplished in her womb ; to which the most pure Virgin yielded with profoundest humility, saying, “ Behold the handmaid of the Lord : be it done unto me according to Thy word.” From which thou shouldst learn to submit thyself to the Will of God in whatever He commands Thee, even though they be things most difficult and beyond thy strength, confiding in the Divine assistance, with the aid of which thou wilt be able to do that of which thou art not of thyself capable, and the Holy Spirit will come upon thee and assist and strengthen thee if thou dost trust thyself to His word and art firmly confident in His grace ; beg it of Him with humility, and ponder how greatly God exalts the humble, since He raised her to the high dignity of His Mother, who put herself in the last place, esteeming herself as the servant of the Lord. Humble thyself, therefore, to the very dust, and thou wilt find favour with the Lord.

TWENTIETH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE INCARNATION OF THE ETERNAL WORD.

First Point.—Consider that as soon as the most Blessed Virgin had said the “fiat” and given her consent, the Eternal Word became man, His most holy body being formed by the virtue of the Holy Ghost in the most pure womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in which thou hast much to meditate. First, how God keeps His word and fulfils the promise which He had made of old to the Fathers, of being made man and coming down to redeem the human race; and although He delayed many centuries, He yet came in due time and at the most opportune moment for the remedy of the world; from which thou shouldst draw great confidence that He will come and put an end to thy wants and comfort thee by His visitation, if thou lose not the confidence thou shouldst have in Him, even though He appear to thee to delay His coming; at the same time learn also not to fail in the accomplishment of thy good purposes and resolutions, that thy service be not of the lips only, but put into action with all promptitude and faithfulness, such as the Lord uses towards thee.

Second Point.—Contemplate on the one hand the immensity of God, His greatness and His inaccessible light, which the heaven of heavens cannot contain; His sanctity, which is greater than we can conceive; how He is adored and worshipped on the throne of His glory by the angels, the cherubim and seraphim, and by all creatures in His great power and majesty, and then lower thine eyes to the narrow breast of Mary, and see Him shut in and reduced to that obscure abode. Compare the one with the other, and see the seraphim and all the angelic hosts as it were in suspense of admiration at this mystery,

at seeing the infinite become finite and immensity contained in so small a space, and break out into affections of admiration, and call upon all creatures to find tongues wherewith to praise God for the admirable works of His love : here it is that He has shown His power more than in the creation of the universe ; His love more than in all else that He has done for man ; His wisdom more than in all the works of His Hand ; here He has manifested His humility in uniting His divinity to our humanity, God with man in one being ; His patience in enduring for nine months so narrow and obscure a prison : cease not to give Him thanks for so many and such great benefits as He has conferred on thee in this work of His Incarnation ; offer thyself to be His slave that thou mayst serve Him eternally, and beg of Him His grace to correspond as thou shouldst to so many mercies by the imitation of His virtues.

Third Point.—Consider the joy that the archangel Gabriel must have felt at his favourable reception, and with what jubilee he must have returned to heaven after having so successfully accomplished the mission on which he had been sent ; behold likewise the glory of the most Holy Trinity at the fulfilment, after so many centuries of promise, of the decree for the redemption of mankind ; also the delight of the angels at the approach of the refilling of the vacant thrones in their midst, through the merits of the Person of Christ ; see how they descend to acknowledge that Lord who being man was also God, how they adored and worshipped Him as the Son of the Most High, and what love they acquired for men at seeing their nature honoured by the Divine Person, and a man raised to be God, without any feeling of envy at so great a good, nor regret to see a mortal man lifted up above their heads to a dignity higher than theirs ; and approach thou also with them to reverence and adore that ineffable and immortal Lord become a mortal man for thee, humble thyself in His presence, owning thyself to be unworthy of so great a mercy, and learn not to be

envious, but to rejoice when thou seest others raised above thee, as the angels rejoiced to see the Divine Word united to our humanity, a man of earth exalted above the highest spirits of heaven.

Fourth Point.—Contemplate the joy and spiritual consolation that the Blessed Virgin Mary experienced in this mystery ; for, as St. Peter Chrysologus¹ expresses it, when she had given her “ fiat : ” “ Sensit Divinitatis ingressum,” she felt the incoming of the Divinity and the Eternal Word entering her womb, and recognised by Divine ordinance the operation of that mystery within her, which was hidden from all creatures, and found herself elevated to that most high dignity of Mother of God : who, in receiving a body from her, communicated most liberally to her the infinite treasure of His graces, and, as St. Thomas tells us, she remained from that moment, as it were, deified with the Person of God who had become man in her womb, after the manner that iron in the furnace becomes penetrated and identified with fire, and as crystal with the sun that bathes it in its rays, for thus did the inaccessible light of God penetrate and bathe the soul of the most pure Virgin when He entered her womb and became man for us, and He then communicated to her such joy as no tongue can declare : O Virgin, most blessed, I rejoice at thy joy, and with the angels and archangels, and with all creatures, visible and invisible, I congratulate thee, and thank God for the graces He bestowed on thee in that moment, and I beseech thee that since thou art so rich thou wouldst communicate to me some part, however small, of thy grace, that I may show myself grateful to thy most Holy Son, and may imitate and serve Him always. Amen.

¹ Chrysol. Serm. de Arm.

*TWENTY-FIRST MEDITATION.**For the Saturday.*

ON THE PERSON OF CHRIST, HIS PREROGATIVES AND VIRTUES.

First Point.—Let us now consider the words that the archangel St. Gabriel said to the Blessed Virgin when he offered her, on the part of God, a son, without injury to her virginity, and in which he foretold what were to be His qualities, as follows: “And thou shalt call His name Jesus, He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father; and He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end.” In all of which there is much to meditate: 1st, Consider the Person of Christ, God and man in one person, His soul blessed and glorious from the first instant of His conception, exempt from every sin, stain, or imperfection, and to whom heaven gave the name of Jesus which signifies Saviour, because with the price of His blood He was to redeem the world, and as soon as He had being He offered Himself to the Eternal Father a holocaust and sacrifice for men; ponder also that, not having sinned in Adam, He should have been exempt from the miseries contracted in Adam, and have been born impassible, and with the properties of a glorious body which He afterwards had; but His infinite love and the greatness of His charity compelled Him to be born passible and mortal, and to subject Himself to the same calamities, labours, and miseries as other men, in order to redeem us at the price of His Blood and Passion: give Him thanks for so great a mercy, and beg His grace to humble thyself, and to suffer unto death for His love.

Second Point.—Consider what the angel said, namely,

that He should be "great," for He was so in all things, in charity, in power, in wisdom, in doctrine, and teaching, in miracles, in humility, and patience, and in all other virtues; great and so great that none before equalled Him, and none since can be compared to Him. Ponder that He alone is truly great who is so before God, and that all the greatness of this world is as a dream and no more than a shadow, for the great ones of the earth if they have not virtue are as though they were not, and despicable before God. Contemplate how Christ being so great comported Himself as a little one, and behaved with extreme humility amongst men, conversing with them as one of themselves and serving them in the meanest offices; from whom thou shouldst learn to humble thyself more than others if thou be exalted in the dignities of this world.

Third Point.—Consider those words of the archangel, "He shall be called the Son of the Most High," for such He was really and truly; His life corresponded to the life of the Son of God, and He merited to be acclaimed as the true Son of God, to be adored and honoured as such by all the heavens and the earth; rejoice to have such a Redeemer, and placing thy hand on thy breast consider whether thy life corresponds with thy origin and dignity, for being, as St. Paul says, "by nature children of wrath," (Ephes. ii.), we are "by grace made sons of God." See whether thou art like such a Father, and art worthy to be called a son of God, and be ashamed in His presence at finding thyself so bound down to creatures and so unworthy of this name, and beg of the Lord to raise thee with His hand to serve Him, to amend and to work in a manner becoming the favours that He has done thee.

Fourth Point.—Consider the remaining words of the archangel which say, "and God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father; and He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end;" see Him crowned King of the race of David, occupied in thy welfare as though He were born for thee

alone, and consider what gratitude thou dost owe Him who has done thee so much good. Ponder that he says, that He shall reign in the house of Jacob who received not only one blessing as his father Isaac, but as many as he had sons, because the kingdom of Christ and its wealth is not limited, but infinite, having as many blessings as it has children, and as many kingdoms as it has servants: see that thou lose not the one that is prepared for thee; and lastly weigh those words: "and of His kingdom there shall be no end," for it is to be eternal, for ever, without end or diminution for ever. Dig deep by meditation into this eternity, and thereby thou wilt know how shortlived is everything temporal, and how worthy of esteem is that which is eternal; and resolve most firmly to seek after celestial things and to despise earthly ones.

TWENTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Fourth Sunday in Advent.

ON THE GOSPEL—(LUKE iii.)

In the reign of Tiberius Cesar, &c. God sent His word to John in the desert, and he came along the banks of the Jordan preaching the baptism of penance according to the prophecy of Isaias, "a voice of one crying in the wilderness: prepare ye the ways of the Lord."

First Point.—Consider that, as St. Peter Chrysologus says, God waited to come into the world at the time of its greatest need, when it was most abandoned, and the government of men most perverted and tyrannical, and when its cure seemed most hopeless, in order to teach us that the time of our greatest need is the eve of the visitation of God; and that when we are most destitute of human aid then is the Divine assistance nearest. Praise God for His mercy and providence, and for the care He

has of His elect, and confide in His bounty when thou seest thyself most lonely and neglected by men, for then is the visitation and favour of God, who watchest over thy welfare, nearest at hand.

Second Point.—Consider whom God chose for His precursor and the preacher of His Word ; he was not one of the very learned who discoursed in the schools, nor of the doctors who are famous amongst men, nor of the powerful and wealthy of the age, but a St. John brought up in the desert in solitude and penance, poor in all temporal wealth, but very rich in spiritual things ; unknown to men, but well known to and familiar with God and His angels : such a one as this does God prize and esteem and choose for His greatest undertakings : from which thou shouldst draw a high appreciation of virtue, of retirement, of prayer, of penance, and of poverty, and great disesteem of wealth and interest with men, and of all that the world worships, since all is as naught before the throne of God ; and if thou be His minister, learn the qualities thou shouldst have for Him to confide to thee His undertakings, and those which they should possess whom thou dost employ in matters that are under thy charge, not allowing thyself to be blinded by human applause, nor the lustre of nobility, learning, or interest, but taking note of virtue and sanctity, and if thou possess these, God will draw thee from the desert for the highest enterprises if it be for His glory and service.

Third Point.—See St. John coming down from the desert along the borders of the Jordan barefooted, his garment made of skins, his hair long and dishevelled, seasoned to the inclemencies of the weather, poor and disinterested, preaching the baptism of penance, esteemed and followed by the people and by innumerable men, who came to hear him and to receive his baptism, enflamed with the desire of salvation by the fire of his words : for it is these flames that do the work more effectually than rhetoric or human artifice : join thou also this band, hear

his words and resolve to do penance for thy sins : consider how he calls it a baptism because it purifies the soul of its stains, and on account of the sweetness and joy of that purification : raise thy heart to God and beg of Him this water and tears of true penance, and also that He will send into His Church preachers of sanctity, zeal, and spirit, like St. John, to enflame it with lively fire.

Fourth Point.—Consider the words of St. John's sermon as though spoken to thyself and heard from his mouth : "prepare the way of the Lord : " see how near God is, and how He would come into thy soul ; prepare the way for Him, levelling the mountains of pride, and plucking up the thorns of vice and inordinate love of riches and sensual delights, and preparing thy soul by mortification and penance ; turn thine eyes on thy past life, and consider with attention and at leisure the path thou hast followed until now, and endeavour to make it straight for the future that the Lord may come and abide in thy soul : beg of Him to prepare thee and to raise thee up with His hand that thou mayest commence to serve Him with fervour from to-day.

TWENTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE VISITATION OF THE VIRGIN MARY OUR LADY TO
ST. ELIZABETH.

First Point.—Contemplate the most Blessed Virgin leaving her house on foot, in the company of St. Joseph and of some women of her family, and travelling sixteen leagues into the mountains of Judea where St. Elizabeth lived, in order to visit her and congratulate her on having

conceived a son, and to sanctify him in his mother's womb ; notice the rapidity of her step, wishing to reach quickly a place of recollection and to sanctify the house of Zachary, listen to the holy conversations she holds with the persons travelling with her, the words of life so sweet and profitable which fall from her lips, the joy and consolation of those that accompany her : see the angels that follow her rejoicing in her society and pay homage to the Lord she carries in her womb : enter by meditation into the interior of her soul, and contemplate the Divine fire that burns in her breast, the affections of her soul, the converse she has with the God that she bears within her, and the favours she receives at each step from His hand : join thou this holy company, travel with the Blessed Virgin, lose not sight of her, nor leave her : beg of her to permit thee to accompany her, hearken to, savour and enjoy those celestial colloquies, and learn at the same time for thy good and for the profit of thy soul, how thou shouldst converse in thy journeyings, how thou shouldst travel, and how comport thyself therein towards God and towards men.

Second Point.—Consider the charity and humility of the Blessed Virgin which shine forth in this visit, her charity in leaving the seclusion she so loved, in order to go and sanctify that house and especially St. John who was to be the precursor of Christ ; and draw thence a desire to assist thy neighbours in what concerns their souls, even though it be therefore necessary occasionally to leave thy retirement, or as is sometimes said to leave God for God, and to seek thy neighbours' profit without neglecting thine own. Ponder her humility—she the superior visiting her inferior, the Mother of God, His servant, and on entering the house saluting her first, condemning thus all human distinctions, and teaching us to humble ourselves the more, the higher the dignity to which we are raised.

Third Point.—Consider the words that Our Lady addressed to St. Elizabeth and the effect they produced :

these words were, according to St. Bonaventure :¹ "Salve soror Elizabeth," God be with thee, sister Elizabeth, and so effective were they, that at once and without delay our Lord God was with her, and with the child she bore, and with Zachary her husband, and the whole house was filled with the Holy Ghost ; for as the Blessed Virgin was so full of God, from the abundance of her heart the house was filled, and St. John forestalling the use of his reason bounded with joy on account of the delight that his soul experienced at receiving the grace of God ; and as St. John Chrysostom remarks, he then commenced to preach Christ and fill his office of precursor : such were the effects of Mary's brief words. Exclaim then and say with burning affection of thy heart : "O mouth-piece of the Holy Ghost, and tongue inflamed with the fire of charity, speak one word to this frozen heart that it may be inflamed with the fire of Divine love ! O Queen of Heaven, visit my soul, more needy than that of St. John, and draw it out of sin and from the tepidity in which it lies ! Learn, oh, my soul, when needful to visit thy neighbours ; and study how thou shouldst spend thy time, and how employ thyself, when visiting ; contemplate at leisure what the Blessed Virgin did and said during the three months she passed with St. Elizabeth, and learn in her school how thou shouldst conduct thyself."

Fourth Point.—Consider the answer of St. Elizabeth, so humble and so grateful for the favour done her by the Holy Virgin : "Whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me ? For, behold, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy ; and blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord" (Luke i.) ; in which thou hast much to meditate and to learn, deriving affections of imitation, joy, and devotion, from each word and each mystery therein contained.

¹ Bona. Med. ii., de vita Christi.

Recognise the influence of devotion to this Sovereign Lady, and how much they grow in virtue who treat familiarly with her, since one word of hers produced so much effect in that house, that St. John leaped for joy at receiving grace and being freed from sin ; because there is no joy or true contentment without the grace of God, nor can any be experienced by him who is bound with the chains of sin ; St. John escaped therefrom at the visitation of the Blessed Virgin, for she is the Mother of sinners, and by her means they are freed from their sins. And notice that St. Elizabeth adds that the Blessed Virgin is blessed because she believed, that thou mayst learn how important it is to believe and have confidence in God who fulfilled in her His promises, as He always does with those that trust themselves to His Divine majesty.

TWENTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE MAGNIFICAT AND ON THE BIRTH OF ST. JOHN.

First Point.—Consider how the Blessed Virgin, on hearing herself praised by the mouth of St. Elizabeth, broke out into the praises of God, giving glory to Him for all, she denied not what St. Elizabeth said, because, as St. Thomas teaches, humility is founded on truth, but she referred all the praise to God as the fountain and origin of the grace that had wrought these things in her, and from whom all good proceeds ; and being so measured in her words, she here becomes eloquent, for as they were in praise of God whose love consumed her soul, she could not restrain herself, and all seemed to her little to magnify and render glory to the Lord, for the saints speak little

to men, but much to God; from which thou shouldst draw affections of humility and gratitude to God, confessing, as thou canst with truth, that of thyself thou hast nothing but sin, and that whatever good thou possessest comes from His hand, giving Him continually thanks for the mercies He does thee, and beseeching the angels and their Queen, and all the saints, to thank Him for thee, and to supply what is wanting in thee.

Second Point.—Meditate one by one all the words uttered by the Blessed Virgin on this occasion, for they are all full of mystery and instruction. The first were, "My soul doth magnify the Lord." In which she declares and teaches us that she praises God, not with her mouth alone, but with her spirit, her soul, and all its powers; and she speaks not as of the past, but in the present, she magnifies Him, for she was always exalting, praising, and glorifying Him without ceasing, for not even during her sleep did she leave off blessing Him, according to the words of the Canticles: "I sleep and my heart watcheth" (Cant. v.); from which thou shouldst learn to praise God at all times, and in all thy works and actions, not only by those of the body but also with thy whole soul. The second were, "My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." Here the Blessed Virgin declares that she acknowledges all that is good in her to come from God, and she teaches us that there is no true joy but in Him, and that this has its root in the soul, and thence is communicated to the body and to the sensitive organs, according to the words of the pious author of the "Imitation:" "Keep a good conscience, and thou shalt always have joy."¹ And on the contrary, if thou hast a bad conscience, thou wilt be incapable of perfect joy; and she says that she rejoiced in God her Saviour, because from Him as such proceeds all grace and spiritual joy.

Third Point.—In this point, let us consider ten reasons that the Blessed Virgin gives for praising and

¹ "Imitation," b. ii., chap. 6.

magnifying God, which are indicated in the following verses : First, "Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid." This considers God on the one hand, and Mary on the other. God who looks on the humble and turns away from the proud ; and Mary who ever humbled herself and regarded herself as a servant ; for which reason God always looked at her, and she praises Him therefore. The second was : "For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." In which thou shouldst perceive how great a happiness it is when God looks down on a soul, since all generations call it blessed. Ponder how great a felicity it is to attain to the glory of the blessed, and use the means whereby the Blessed Virgin attained thereunto. The third was, "Because He that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy is His name." The things that God had wrought in the Blessed Virgin were such that she could not recount them, nor did it seem to her possible to declare them fitly, and so she only says in general that they were "great." Ponder slowly the grandeur and the prerogatives of this heavenly Queen and Lady, and rejoice that they are such, so great and so worthy of her to whom they belong, and give that sacred Virgin a thousand praises for them. Fourth, "And His mercy is from generation unto generations to them that fear Him." In which she declares that His infinite mercy is not limited to one time but extends to all ages. Fifth, "He hath shown might in His arm," in nothing more than in becoming man, which was the work of His power and wisdom. Sixth, "He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart." This is the work of His justice, and we find therein motive for praising God, not only on account of the mercy which He uses towards the good, but also because of the justice which He executes on the wicked, humbling the proud and conceited, and exalting the humble. The seventh and eighth motives agree with this one, "He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble : He hath filled the

hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away." For which He should be praised and extolled, and ponder for thy profit how God delights to look on the humble and the poor, and succours them, and how He spurns the proud and rich and pampered ones of this world, and withdraws from them, leaving them empty. In the last verses, two more motives are declared, saying: "He hath received Israel His servant, being mindful of His mercy as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever." In which she praises God and gives us reason for blessing Him, 1st, because of the providence and care He has of His chosen ones; and 2dly, because of the fidelity with which He keeps His promises; for though He delays for hidden reasons which we cannot comprehend, yet He never forgets to visit His own in due time, and to console and enrich them with His graces as He did St. Elizabeth, granting her St. John for a son in her old age, and to the world in sending the promised Messiah by means of the Queen of Heaven. Learn to bless God, and to persevere in thy desires, awaiting mercy from the hands of the Lord.

Fourth Point.—In this last point should be considered what the Blessed Virgin did during those three months spent in the house of St. Elizabeth, what were her conversations and discourses, what her actions, and what the amiability and diligence with which she waited on her cousin, occupying herself in the affairs of the house. Ponder the haste with which she made the journey, and the length of time she spent in the house for the consolation of all, and see how spiritual works should be done slowly; and lastly. as St. Bernard says, St. John was born into the arms of the Blessed Virgin, from whom he received his greatest favours. Beg of her to receive thee into her hands; offer her all thy works, thoughts, and words, and thou wilt receive through her great fruit.

*TWENTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.**For the Wednesday.*

ON THE EXPECTATION AND DESIRES OF OUR BLESSED LADY.

First Point.—Consider first the desires the Blessed Virgin had from the first instant of her conception, when she already possessed the use of her reason, and was filled with grace and Divine light, of the coming into the world of the desired of nations, who was to be the salvation of the world, which desires ever increased and augmented in proportion as she grew in charity and holiness; and at the time of her delivery they must have been as a mighty river when about to discharge itself into the sea, and as a great fire which has continually been fed until its flames reach up to heaven. Such were, doubtless, the ardent desires of the Blessed Virgin Mary to possess, serve, adore, and reverence the Saviour of the world. Ponder how she did not desire Him for herself alone, but for the whole earth, and, as holy Simeon did, for the salvation of Israel, and learn from this heavenly mistress what should be thy desires, and in what thou shouldst occupy thy heart, not with the transitory things of earth, but with heavenly and Divine ones, and in the universal good of thy brethren.

Second Point.—Consider how the Blessed Virgin joined prayers, supplications, entreaties, sighs, and good works to her desires, and by all these merited that God should shorten the time and come to redeem the world, fulfilling what He said by the mouth of David, "By reason of the misery of the needy and the groans of the poor now will I arise, saith the Lord" (Ps. xi.); and thus did He arise and come at the sighs and supplications of the Blessed Virgin. Ponder what was revealed to St. Elizabeth of Portugal, and is related by St. Bonaventure—namely, that the Blessed Virgin spent a great part of the night

and day in prayer, and desires of seeing and knowing her who was to be so blessed as to deserve to be the Mother of the Saviour, consuming herself in anxious desires of serving her as a slave, judging herself to be unworthy to serve her, and begging of the Lord that grace, and that by these humble aspirations she merited to be chosen for the Mother of the Saviour she so longed for ; from all which thou shouldst draw desires of serving God, and of serving those that serve Him, and fervour of spirit wherewith to accompany thy works, prayers, and mortifications, if thou wouldst obtain fruit from them.

Third Point.—Consider the firm hope the Queen of Heaven had of the fulfilment of her desires ; and although, as the wise man says, “Hope that is deferred afflicteth the soul” (Prov. xiii.), our Blessed Lady was not afflicted by the delay in the fulfilment of hers, but rather with great equanimity of soul and tranquillity of mind she confided in God for the accomplishment of her desires, increasing each day her petitions, lamentations, prayers, penances, and good works, with the firm hope of obtaining what she longed for ; from whom thou shouldst learn to have longanimity in thy desires, and confidence of obtaining what thou dost wish and ask for. Confide in the Lord even though He delay, and thou shalt see the fruit of thy petitions.

Fourth Point.—Consider how, as the time of her delivery drew near, the desires of the Blessed Virgin to see and serve the expected of nations, increased even as a stone falls with greater rapidity in proportion as it approaches its centre, and she repeated those words of the Canticle, “Who shall give thee to me for my brother” (Cant. viii.) ; for as from the fire flames ascend, so in like manner from the fire of desires in the Blessed Virgin there went up continual petitions, sighs, and supplications, begging a Saviour for the world ; and God fulfilled her request as He did that of Moses, by giving into her hands the manna from heaven for the salvation of men. Ponder here that as flowers produce fruit, so do holy

desires bring forth good works, and that to those on whom God wills to bestow His favours, He first sends desires of them, and the more these increase the greater the proof that their fulfilment is at hand. See that thou neglect not the desires that God sends thee, but rather prize them as proofs of His mercies, and of the favours that He wishes to bestow on thee. Raise thy heart to God and beg of Him constancy in thy desires, and courage and fervour to put them in execution, and to receive His Divine visitation in thy soul.

TWENTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE RETURN OF OUR LADY TO NAZARETH, AND ON WHAT TOOK PLACE THERE UP TO THE TIME OF HER GOING TO BETHLEHEM.

First Point.—Consider how, after the birth of St. John, the Blessed Virgin returned to her retirement at Nazareth, leaving her cousin St. Elizabeth consoled and joyful ; teaching us to recollect ourselves when we have terminated the ministry God has confided to us, in order to look after our own souls and attend to our own advancement ; accompany her on her journey and humbly entreat her to admit thee into her society with the holy persons who travel with her : see the modesty and recollection of her demeanour, how she comforted herself at the inns, what sweet and holy words fell from her lips, externally she conversed with men, but internally she was wholly occupied with God, loving Him, speaking to Him, and uniting herself intimately with Him : see the haste with which she flew back to her retirement, and the desire that possessed her to give herself all to God ; beg of her to teach thee so to converse with men that thou mayest not

lose God, but rather mayest each day grow and advance in His service, and beg of the Lord to direct thy ways to His honour and glory and to the profit of thy soul.

Second Point.—Consider the silence with which the Blessed Virgin guarded the Divine mysteries and the favours that she had received from the hand of the Lord, since she discovered not the greatest of all, that of the Incarnation, to her spouse St. Joseph, whom she so much loved, knowing with certainty that it would be to him the occasion of grief, anxiety, and suffering; leaving this affair to God, confiding in His goodness that he would bring her with advantage out of the strife she anticipated, and would reveal the mystery to her spouse, when it should be needful for His holy service, and draw hence a firm resolution to keep silence on the mercies of God to thee, and a firm confidence in His pity that He will draw profit for thee out of the dangers to which He may expose thee. Cry out and beseech the holy Virgin to teach thee how to be a faithful treasurer of the favours of the Lord, and beg of the Lord His grace to guard and esteem them as thou art bound to do.

Third Point.—Contemplate the tempest of thoughts which agitated the soul of the glorious St. Joseph when he perceived that the most pure Virgin was with child, and how he never yielded to believe the least thing contrary to her purity; the grief he experienced at the thought of leaving her, the affliction of withdrawing from her, the fear of remaining; the grief of the holy Virgin for the suffering of her holy spouse, the anguish of both in such trying circumstance, and the means they adopted, namely, recourse to God, Who so easily in a dream revealed the mystery and filled them both with delight and consolation, dispersing the clouds that overshadowed their hearts. Ponder for thy profit that it is consonant with the ways of the Lord of old, to confer great favours on His chosen ones, with a cross or labours attached to them, and prepare thyself to suffer when thou dost ask or receive favours from His hand, and say to Him with fer-

vour : Send me more and more crosses, O Lord, for I desire to suffer for Thy love. Learn to confide in God and to call on Him in thy afflictions, and He will console thee and bring thee out of them with profit as He did these holy spouses.

Fourth Point.—Consider on the one hand the joy and on the other hand the bashfulness with which the holy St. Joseph confronted the Blessed Virgin after this storm had blown over ; his joy at the knowledge of the mystery at seeing within his house the Saviour of the world, at having the opportunity of serving His most holy Mother, of enjoying her presence and society, of assisting, defending, and honouring her with all his strength, and the bashfulness caused by the remembrance of past thoughts, as well as by the consideration of his unworthiness to serve and accompany so exalted a lady. Meditate the words full of humility and esteem for her person which he addressed to her and the very humble reply of the Blessed Virgin, the new bond of spiritual love which henceforth united these heavenly spouses, the devotion and tenderness of their hearts, the sweet tears that flowed from their eyes, and how silently their hearts conversed and their spirits were united by a new link of charity in the service of the Lord who had joined them in so sovereign a mystery, such is the effect produced by suffering endured for God. Draw thence affections of patience in thy afflictions and resolve to condemn no one on suspicions, presumptions, or rumours, since even things that are evident cannot always be condemned, and more especially in spiritual persons ; abandon all judgment to God, to whom be praise and thanksgiving in all things and for all things, for ever and ever. Amen.

TWENTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE JOURNEY OF OUR LADY TO BETHLEHEM WITH
HER HOLY SPOUSE.

First Point.—Consider the ways of Divine Providence, which ordained that Cæsar Augustus should issue an edict that the whole world was to be enrolled, every one in the city of his origin, in order to bring at that time St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin to Bethlehem, the city of their race, and that the prophecies might be accomplished which said that Christ would be born in that city; from which thou shouldst learn how certain of fulfilment are the decrees of God, and that His will always be accomplished, and what He has ordained with regard to thee will come to pass even though it be necessary therefore to move the world, as happened on this occasion, for the fulfilment of His decree. Subject and humble thyself to His holy will; place thyself in His hands with extreme indifference and submission, and say to Him with David, “My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready” (Ps. lvi.), do with me according to Thy most holy will.

Second Point.—Consider the obedience of the glorious St. Joseph and of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who, at so rigorous a season, and with her delivery so close at hand, and having such just reasons for excusing themselves, nevertheless obeyed, most punctually, without excuses or murmurings, a tyrannical emperor in a thing so difficult and painful; and, although not obliged to obey him, to teach us all to obey and respect whomsoever holds the place of a superior, even though the things commanded be difficult and apparently unseasonable. Ponder how Christ fulfilled what He said by the mouth of David, “In the head of the book it is written of me

that I should do Thy will : O my God, I have desired it, and Thy law in the midst of my heart" (Ps. xxxix.), since He came into the world obeying ; and the first thing that is heard of Him is that He obeyed even before His birth, and in being born, in order to restore by His obedience what Adam lost by his disobedience. O Lord, and Emperor of heaven ! give me grace to obey all my superiors with punctuality, as Thou didst obey thine, and that not only with the body but with heart and soul.

Third Point.—Meditate the journey undertaken by the most Blessed Virgin Mary, our Lady, and her spouse St. Joseph ; for, although he might have gone alone to fulfil this decree and excuse his spouse, she would not permit it, but chose to accompany him and share his trials. Contemplate the road they travel in the depth of winter, amidst rain, cold, and wind, and enduring the inconveniences of poverty, all which they suffered with joyful hearts for God, receiving consolation and interior delight from the Lord who accompanied them, for he that has God with him suffers all things with joy for His love. Enter by consideration into the heart of the most holy Mary and contemplate the divine intercourse she held with the Lord she carried in her womb ; the fire of love that burnt in her breast, the desires of seeing Him in her arms, the joy she experienced at the expectation of her approaching delivery, her regret that she had no dwelling-place worthy of such a Lord, and the devout conversations she had with her holy spouse ; accompany them in this pilgrimage ; offer thyself to their service ; see, hear, and take note of what they do, say, and think, and direct thy ways to the Lord by means of their teaching.

Fourth Point.—Consider how on reaching Bethlehem they paid the tribute to Cæsar, and observe that the kings of the earth show their power by exactions, whilst the King of heaven manifests His by giving His very blood to His vassals. Meditate the tyranny and avarice

of Cæsar, and the meekness and liberality of Christ, and resolve to abandon human princes in order to follow the Divine King. Contemplate also how, night coming on, and St. Joseph having in that city so many relations, yet there was not one who would give him shelter or lodging where he could withdraw with his holy Spouse, a repulse such as the poor generally suffer : observe how little reliance can be placed in relatives, and how Christ, being a permanent citizen of heaven, from the first instant of His birth, behaved as a stranger and a pilgrim upon earth, and be thou also as a pilgrim in this world ; contemplate the poverty of Christ, and beg His grace and favour to follow His footsteps, despising the world and all its pomps, sensuality, and interest, and heeding nothing but thy own advancement and salvation.

TWENTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE DISPOSITIONS WE SHOULD HAVE IN ORDER THAT
CHRIST MAY BE BORN IN OUR SOULS BY HIS GRACE.

First Point.—Place before thine eyes the Blessed Virgin and the glorious St. Joseph in the city of Bethlehem, night coming on, in the depth of winter, fatigued with travelling, and seeking a lodging from door to door without being able to obtain it ; and imagine that they come to thy door and ask it of thee ; consider the bliss that approaches thy dwelling, and listen to the words the divine Spouse speaks to thy soul : “ Open to me, my sister, my love, for my head is full of dew ” (Cant. v.), and see what thou shouldst answer, and what felicity will be thine if thou dost merit to receive and possess such a host in thy house. Open the door of thy heart and beg of Him, with Abraham, to do thee this favour,

and to pass not away without honouring thy poor dwelling by resting therein a while ; by the light of meditation consider and examine the secrets of thy heart and see whether thou dost find therein aught that offends the Divine Majesty, or hinders His entrance ; sweep it, cleanse and adorn it, as becomes so great a Lord : beg of God to send His angels to dispose thy abode in a fitting manner for His Divine Majesty, and of the Blessed Virgin Mary to prepare thy soul, as she prepared her own, that thou mayest deserve to receive Him ; beseech the glorious St. Joseph to deign to lodge in thy house, and offer him all that thou hast—thy soul, thy life, and thy heart.

Second Point.—Consider the excellence of the Lord who comes into the world, who is to be born, and who desires to dwell in thy heart, and what is the disposition He asks of thee, namely, purity of heart, that thou shouldst root up vice and plant virtue, for being purity itself He cannot endure the bad odour of corrupt habits and sins. Place thy hand on thy breast and see the vices that thou hast sheltered there all thy life, how thou hast been a sink of sins, and how unworthy thou art to receive this Lord ; cast out from thee the idols of earthly affections and delights, wash with tears the abode into which the Lord is to enter, strike thy breast and say with heartfelt contrition : Lord, I am not worthy that Thy Divine Majesty should enter into my poor house, which has been a den of lions and a sink of vice, it grieves me to the heart that I have offended Thee, and I beseech Thee to pardon my ignorance and weakness and to give me Thy grace and make me worthy to receive Thee into my soul.

Third Point.—Consider how the Blessed Virgin prepared herself to receive the Lord, look back to the former meditations and thou wilt see that the Queen of Heaven prepared herself by purity of body and soul, by retirement from the world, recollection and prayer, by obedience, penance and mortification, with humility, con-

tempt of herself, esteem of her neighbours, great meekness, patience, and exalted virtues, which thou shouldst endeavour to acquire in order to become a worthy dwelling-place for the Lord. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests," says our Redeemer, "but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head" (Matt. viii.); the foxes have their holes in retired and secure places, and the birds place their nests on the trees and on high towers, they line them inside with soft down for rearing therein their young, and on the outside they fence them with thorns to defend them from the serpents and birds of prey; such an abode as this does Christ silently ask us to prepare Him in our souls, withdrawing ourselves from the bustle of the world into the security of prayer and recollection, adorning our souls interiorly with the down of meekness, charity, mercy, and devotion, and exteriorly with the asperities of the hair shirt, fasting, and mortification, which may defend us from our infernal foe. O Lord, would that I could prepare myself worthily to lodge Thee in my soul and celebrate this feast with Thee. Send Thine angels to prepare me, give me Thy grace and holiness that may render me worthy of Thee.

Fourth Point.—Consider lastly the inestimable riches that are offered to him who receives Christ into his house, and the blindness of the world in spending so much time and care on the dwellings of the great ones of the earth, and its neglect and carelessness with regard to the dwelling of the King of Heaven; it so being that all that the world can give is fragile, false, and perishable, and what the Lord gives is real, eternal. Ponder how the Ark remained for three months in the house of Obededon and God blessed him and all his descendants with great wealth of spiritual and temporal riches, and that Christ our Redeemer entering the house of St. Elizabeth when still in the womb of Mary, filled all with the Holy Spirit, sanctifying St. John in his mother's womb; because, as the sun bathes with light every place where it enters, so this divine Sun bathes in spiritual light and bestows in-

estimable riches on all whom He visits and who receive Him worthily ; beg of the Lord to visit thee and communicate to thee some share of the celestial treasures that He brings into the world.

TWENTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

For Christmas Day.

ON THE BIRTH OF CHRIST OUR LORD.

First Point.—First consider how the most pure Virgin withdrew, with her most holy spouse St. Joseph, to a poor abode in the suburbs of Bethlehem, which served as a stable for animals and a shelter for the poor : here they, as poor, took refuge, there being no one found to give them lodging in the whole city ; and the Blessed Virgin being aware that the time had come when the Redeemer was to enter the world, withdrew alone, as St. Bonaventure¹ tells us, to the innermost and most retired part of the stable, and there arranged a little straw with the utmost care she could in the manger, and there, barefooted and on bended knees, her hair falling around her shoulders, her hands and eyes raised to heaven, her soul rapt in highest contemplation, she prayed the Eternal Father with tender affection to fulfil His promise in that hour, and to give to the world its Saviour, and her soul filled with ineffable joy without injury to her virginity, but rather rendering it yet purer, the Eternal Word made flesh issued forth from her womb, and she beheld before her on the straw she had prepared, the Redeemer of the universe, the Son of God made man ; then were heard canticles and heavenly music, a fragrance of sweetest odour was spread around, and the stable of beasts was changed into a throne

¹ S. Bonavent. Med. vii. De Vita Christi.

of glory and a court of heaven; and St. Bonaventure tells us that it was revealed to a contemplative religious of his order, that the Blessed Virgin took her most holy Son with greatest reverence and folded Him in the veil from her head, saying to Him those words which are generally attributed to her at that time: "*Bene veneris, Deus meus, Dominus meus, et filius meus,*"—"Welcome into the world, my God, my Lord, and my Son," and then she pressed Him to her virginal bosom, and the glorious St. Joseph approached full of delight to reverence and adore Him, and to congratulate the Blessed Virgin: thus far St. Bonaventure. In which thou hast much to think and meditate on: first, the forsaken state in which the King of Heaven is born in a poor stable, whilst sinners are so well lodged and served in the opulence of their wealth; secondly, the modesty, recollection, and devotion of the most pure Virgin, and the joy and delight which God communicated to her in that hour in reward of her heroic virtues; and how the Son gazed on His Mother and the Mother on her Son, and whilst their tongues were silent their hearts conversed: contemplate the secrets that the Son discovered to her that time, the tender affection with which His most holy Mother embraced Him, the words so loving and sweet that she spoke to Him, her sorrow at seeing Him suffer from the inclemency of the weather, and at being so destitute of everything necessary for His service and comfort: contemplate the joy and devotion of the glorious St. Joseph at beholding the desired of nations born for the remedy of men, the humility with which he adored Him, and the love and respect with which he took Him in his arms and laid Him against his cheek; and if holy Simeon was so consoled when he received Him in the Temple that he asked the Lord to deliver him from the prison of his body, because he had naught else to desire or to see; what delight must not this holy patriarch have felt in that hour at seeing Him, holding Him in his arms, and being so intimately united with Him! Enter into this favoured and rich stable, adore and reverence

the Divine Infant, and acknowledge Him for thy God and thy King ; beg the Blessed Virgin to allow thee, although unworthy of such a favour, to touch and hold Him ; offer to Him the very flesh of thy heart, thy life and thy soul, with all thy powers and senses, to be His abode if He will but accept of it.

Second Point.—Consider how the Blessed Virgin, in order the better to shelter her most Blessed Son, made for Him a bed in the manger, in order that the hay, the straw, and the breath of the animals might protect Him from the severe cold. Ponder with St. Bernard¹ the lessons He teaches from the pulpit of that manger, and the virtues by which He shows us the road to heaven. Isaias prophesied, says the saint, that He would know how “to refuse the evil and to choose the good ;”² and we see that from the hour that He first trod the earth, He refused the opulence of the world, riches, sensuality, the pride of life, honours and esteem of men and all that the world adores ; and He chose poverty : being born and living in such destitution ; penance : enduring such rigorous mortification, and suffering so many discomforts in His resting-place, His clothing, His abode and from the cold, choosing to be born in the most severe part of the winter and at the chilliest hour of the night, in extreme destitution and want, and humility : taking up His abode in so low a place, in a town so insignificant, unknown and despised, at midnight when all the world is hushed, and Himself so silent that He has not even the power of speech, “*Infans non fans*,” as St. Bernard says, an infant or child without voice ; for being the Word and Voice of the Father, He comes into the world dumb out of humility. Contemplate His patience, His meekness, the very ardent charity with which He loves thee and suffers for thee, and the other virtues that He teaches from the pulpit of the manger, and beg of Him with affection that He would grant thee light to know them, the fire of charity to practise them, and grace to imitate Him and

¹ Bern. Serm. ii. De Nat.

² Isaias vii.

to direct thy path through life according to that which He shows thee by His example.

Third Point.—Enter with humility and devotion into that stable, and adore and reverence thy Redeemer made man for thee; give Him infinite thanks for the favour He has done thee in coming down from heaven to draw thee out of thy captivity at the cost of so many labours, for having clothed Himself with our flesh and for having become thy brother: enter by meditation into His innermost breast and see the love that burns in His heart, the perfection of His understanding, the profound wisdom with which it is adorned, the knowledge it possesses of all things past, present, and future, and how all men were present before Him, and He offered His life in sacrifice to His Eternal Father for thy good; see and contemplate the greatness of God humbled in that infant, His immensity confined, His omnipotence limited, His wisdom hidden: see that child so great, and that King so poor, and the All-powerful disguised in that tender infant; be filled with admiration at this scheme of the Most High and at the refinement of His great love; cry out with joy at having so good a God and Lord, and give Him thousands upon thousands of thanks for the great mercies He has done thee, and beg new ones of Him since He has come down from heaven to confer them on thee: raise thine eyes to heaven, and contemplate Him on the throne of His glory, adored by the seraphim and cherubim and all the heavenly court, and compare that throne with the manger, that magnificence with this poverty, that majesty with this humiliation, that court with this abandonment, and see that it is He Himself Who is there revered by the celestial court, and He Himself Who is here forgotten by men, weep over their blindness and ignorance, and break out into desires of serving Him, of preaching His name and making Him known to the world, and of humbling and abasing thyself in the very dust of the earth in imitation of His example.

Fourth Point.—Consider how, as soon as Christ was

born into the world, the angels came down to adore Him, and acknowledge that child for their Lord ; and, as St. Paul says : “ The heir of all things, by whom also He made the world ” (Heb. i.) Ponder the humility of the angelic spirits, in a second time acknowledging a man for their superior, who by reason of His humanity was of a nature inferior to theirs, and how the proud angels forfeited glory by refusing to so acknowledge Him when God revealed this mystery to them. Ponder likewise how God honoured His Son, when He most humbled and abased Himself ; because it is His custom to honour those who humble themselves the most : contemplate the delight of the most Blessed Virgin at seeing her most precious Son worshipped by the angels, and hearken to the congratulations they offer her and the glorious St. Joseph, to the thanks they received in return ; and, finally, to the canticles they intoned, saying, “ Glory to God in the highest : and on earth peace to men of good will.” Ruminates this honeycomb, pondering each word separately, and thou wilt find in it streams of sweetest devotion.

THIRTIETH MEDITATION.

For the Feast of St. Stephen.

First Point.—Consider that, as St. Fulgentius¹ says, it is not without reason that the Church brings together the death and martyrdom of St. Stephen with the birth of Christ, because the Redeemer is honoured by the sufferings and death of the martyrs, and as He was born for the glory of the world, so through His death the saints are born again to God and for the good of the world : sinners, on the contrary, die in every sense in body and in soul to God and to the world, and they leave this life in deplorable misery. Meditate at leisure

¹ S. Fulg. Serm. de S. Steph.

how soon the martyrdom of St. Stephen was past and how long his glory will endure, how short were his sufferings and how enduring his bliss, and the crown with which for so many centuries already he reigns and triumphs in heaven ; and, on the contrary, see how soon passes away the felicity of the wicked, and how their torment endures and will endure for ever, and take courage from the example of this holy martyr to despise this life for Christ's sake, and to renounce its delights, honours, and riches in order to obtain the reward that God has promised to those who fight honestly without looking back or losing ground in this strife.

Second Point.—Consider St. Stephen in the midst of the council of the priests and doctors of the law, defending the doctrine of Christ our Redeemer, with his face resplendent as that of an angel, for thus should the life of a preacher who would shine in doctrine be also resplendent. Attend and see of what pure metal was the teaching of this saint, since none could answer his reasonings, nor resist the spirit with which he spoke ; notice his constancy and the grace that God communicated to him for the defence of His holy law and the glorification of His holy Name ; and draw thence affections of great confidence in God that He will give thee His holy Spirit to serve Him with, and to give thy life for His love, and to come out victorious from the perils in which He may place thee, giving thee science and wisdom for all that He requires of thee if thou be faithful and constant in His service.

Third Point.—Consider how, whilst the Synagogue was disputing, he raised his eyes to heaven, and he saw its portals opened, and Jesus standing, as St. Bernard tells us, aiding and assisting him, and at his side to defend him. Ponder that the heavens are opened for those who defend the cause of Jesus Christ and suffer for His love, and that He assists and strengthens them for the fight in order that they may not fail, but obtain a complete victory, and thereby the promised crown. Consider the crown that God has prepared for thee if thou

dost strive manfully, and that without thy seeing Him, He is at thy side, and assists and defends thee, fighting with thee and for thee against the enemies who would impede thy progress towards heaven ; give Him many thanks for this, and strive to fight with valour to the end. See the heavens opened, wait not for them to be closed, but enter them in company with St. Stephen : follow his steps, and thou wilt obtain his crown.

Fourth Point.—Consider how he was dragged out of the city with great fury and violence by the people, and how they stoned him as a blasphemer, because the wicked treat Catholic truths and the praises of Christ as blasphemy : heed not their judgments if thou see thyself unjustly condemned. Contemplate the death of this illustrious protomartyr, and how as a faithful disciple of Christ he knelt down and prayed for his enemies rather than for himself, because their sin grieved him more than his own wounds, and learn to have patience to pardon injuries, and to pray to God for those who outrage thee as heartily as St. Stephen did for his foes. Contemplate likewise how that blessed soul freed itself from its body and was introduced by the hands of angels triumphantly into heaven ; see the glory with which he was received, the honour that Christ did to him, and how with His own hand he placed the crown on his head and the palm in his hand, and seated him on the throne of glory where he will reign eternally : offer him a thousand congratulations for his bliss and beg of him, with the utmost tenderness of soul, to lead thee in his footsteps, and assist thee to obtain from the Lord grace and courage to serve Him in this life and to deserve to be crowned in the next.

THIRTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

For the Feast of the Glorious St. John the Evangelist.

First Point.—To-day thou hast to meditate on the life and virtues of the glorious St. John the Evangelist, apostle, evangelist, doctor, virgin, and martyr for Christ, and of all the apostles the most beloved of the Lord, to whom He revealed His highest and most hidden mysteries, and to whom He gave for mother his own most holy Mother, commending her to his care from the cross. Consider first the exalted dignity and the great and important offices for which God chose this apostle, and the grace He gave him for their fulfilment, because God balances the charge with the grace for its execution ; from which thou shouldst draw great courage for whatever God our Lord may command thee, and great confidence that He will give thee strength and valour for the undertakings that He imposes on thee, however arduous they may be ; rejoice at the prerogatives enjoyed by St. John ; give thanks to the Lord for the great favours that He conferred on him, and beg of Him affectionately to bestow like graces upon thee.

Second Point.—Consider how St. John on his side prepared himself by the grace of God for the favours he received, corresponding with them by most exalted virtue and sanctity of life. Ponder and meditate the promptitude and alacrity with which he obeyed the voice of God, when called to the apostolate, leaving his father and his mother and all he possessed in the world and becoming poor for Christ's sake ; the purity of his life, preserving perpetual virginity, the mortification of his passions, the obedience and submission of his will to that of Christ, having no other will than His will ; the fire of divine love that burned in his breast, by which he merited to be most singularly beloved by the Lord, the cordial devotion

he manifested during his whole life towards the most Holy Virgin, his zeal for the souls of his neighbours, and that which he ever had for the honour and glory of God, for which he joyfully offered his life; for, as St. Jerome expresses it, his will was not wanting for martyrdom, but rather martyrdom was wanting to his will: from all which thou shouldst draw affections of esteem and singular devotion to this holy apostle, and likewise an ardent desire to imitate his virtues and to correspond to the grace and vocation of God, rendering thyself worthy to receive His mercies and to be favoured by Him.

Third Point.—Consider how he reposed on the breast of Christ on the night of the Last Supper, and what light Christ then communicated to him whereby to know, transcribe, and preach his mysteries, and with what a fire of divine love he inflamed his heart without causing envy in the other apostles, and how St. John was not vain-glorious on account of these very singular favours, but rather humbled himself the more and kept them secret until commanded by God to publish them; and lastly, ponder that he was not as the favoured ones of this world who use all their influence for their own advancement, but this glorious apostle employed all the favours of God in the service of his neighbours, instructing them, enlightening them, showing them the road to heaven, and obtaining for them great mercies from the Lord; in which thou hast much to learn for the amendment of thy life and conduct: first, learn of St. John to unite thyself with God if thou wouldst acquire light and knowledge of His mysteries; secondly, not to become vain-glorious because of His favours, but rather to humble thyself the more on their account, as St. John humbled himself; thirdly, not to be envious of the proficiency of thy neighbours, as the apostles were not envious of St. John; fourthly, to use thy influence for the advancement of thy neighbours, as this saint employed his. Raise thy heart to God and beg of Him, by the merits of His apostle, to give thee some drops of His grace wherewith to follow

in his footsteps, and occupy thyself in the service of God and the profit of thy neighbour.

Fourth Point.—Consider the dignity to which Christ raised St. John, when at the hour of His death He told His most Blessed Mother to consider him as her son, and told him to consider her as his mother, and from that hour he received her into his house, and ever waited on and assisted her, which was a singular prerogative merited by his exalted virtue. Ponder how grateful St. John must have felt towards Christ for this favour ; and learn thou also to be grateful for those thou mayst receive from His hand. Witness the recollection with which he offered himself to the Blessed Virgin Mary Our Lady, not as her son but as her slave, to serve her eternally. Consider the benignity and tenderness with which the Queen of Heaven received him,—the love she manifested towards him ; and that which burnt in the breast of St. John for her,—the words full of humility, of courtesy, of tenderness and devotion with which they addressed each other on that occasion, and how much St. John must have progressed in holiness through frequent intercourse with the most Holy Mary, and the affection with which he served her for the remainder of his life until he passed away full of merits to heaven, and arouse thyself by his example to esteem this Lady as thy Mother and Mistress, considering as said to thee those words of the Redeemer, “Ecce Mater tua!” “Behold thy mother!” and accept her from this hour, as did St. John, for thy mother, and prostrate at her feet say to her : O Lady, I deserve not to be thy slave, nor to be the servant of the slaves of thy house, but for thy great pity’s sake I beg and beseech of thee to accept me for thy servant, although undeserving. Look not at my unworthiness, but consider thy mercy and greatness, and receive this poor orphan and beggar who asks an alms at thy gate. Stretch forth the hand of thy compassion, cover me with thy cloak, and permit me to remain in thy house to serve thee eternally, as I hope and

trust from thy great bounty and merits, as well as through those of the glorious St. John whom I chose for my intercessor before thy throne.

THIRTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Feast of the Holy Innocents.

ON THE FLIGHT OF OUR LADY INTO EGYPT, AND
THE DEATH OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS.

First Point.—Consider how Our Lady, having returned from Bethlehem with her most Holy Son to Nazareth, to repose in her house and enjoy the treasure that Heaven had bestowed on her, shortly after her return she was pursued by the persecution of Herod, and God commanded that she should leave her country and go with His Son into Egypt, and she at once started on her journey with her holy spouse, and they travelled into Egypt. In which, consider how God wills that His chosen ones shall not rest in this world ; and as holy Job says, "The life of man upon earth is a warfare" (Job vii.) See how, as soon as He was born, Christ began to endure strife, toils, and persecutions, and prepare thyself to suffer all the days of thy life. Seek not for rest here below, for this is not the place of thy dwelling, but rather offer thyself to the Lord to suffer for His love as long as thou livest, for if thou be the companion of His woes, thou wilt also be the companion of His glory.

Second Point.—Consider the exact obedience of the most Holy Virgin and of the glorious St. Joseph, who, that very night as soon as the angel had spoken to the holy patriarch in sleep, without the least delay, arose and started for Egypt, leaving their country, their relatives, and connections, and exiling themselves into those

foreign lands which were hateful to their Hebrew hearts, in order to place Christ in safety and to obey God ; from which thou shouldst draw very firm resolves to obey blindly the commands of thy superiors without discussion or remonstrance, even though they appear to be contrary to reason. Ponder how it appeared dissonant to human prudence to take the child Jesus into Egypt for safety, when the law there commanded the destruction of all male Hebrew children, and yet He was safe there, when He was not secure amidst his relatives and connections, because obedience is a safe harbour for those who embrace it. Ponder, likewise, that the angel did not intimate this order to the Blessed Virgin, although so much the greater in dignity and sanctity ; but to St. Joseph whom the Holy Virgin obeyed as her superior, because it is the will of God that the more exalted and perfect should subject themselves and obey for His love those who are less so, when these hold His place and are in authority. Offer thyself to the Lord to obey all equally for His love, according to His example and that of these obedient saints.

Third Point.—Consider the chastisement that the Lord inflicted on that people on account of their incredulity and ingratitude, flying from them and passing into Egypt, because God abandons the ungrateful, which is the greatest punishment He can inflict on them, leaving them to their vices. Cry aloud with lamentations, and beg of God not to chastise thee so rigorously as to turn His back on thee and withdraw from thee ; and derive hence a most steadfast resolution to be grateful to God and to acknowledge His benefits, in order that He may not be angered against thee and abandon thee to thy vices. Ponder how the Blessed Virgin and the glorious St. Joseph left their country, their house, their relatives and friends, in order not to lose Christ, and resolve in imitation of their example to leave all thou dost possess rather than to lose God.

Fourth Point.—Consider how on Christ's entry into

Egypt all the idols fell from their altars, because the day that Christ enters into a soul there must not remain therein any idol of inordinate affection ; and if He come into thine thou must extirpate all idols therefrom. Meditate the life led by these holy spouses amidst that idolatrous nation during the seven years that their exile lasted ; with what peace and patience they bore with them, doing good to all, and showing them by their example and holy words the road to heaven ; and learn how to converse with the wicked without being contaminated with their vices, but rather converting them to God by thy manner of life, by meekness, charity, and patience ; and, finally, ponder how at this time so many innocent children in Judea suffered martyrdom for Christ. See how Christ was safer in Egypt than they in their own country, for there thou wilt be safest, where God places thee ; and consider the grace that the Redeemer did them, weaving for them at so early an age the crown of martyrdom which they now enjoy in glory ; this was the fruit He produced by His exile, at the same time sanctifying Egypt and rendering it fruitful, as it afterwards became, in holy hermits who are the models of monastic life in His Church.

THIRTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

HOW THE SHEPHERDS CAME TO ACKNOWLEDGE CHRIST.

First Point.—Consider how the angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds who were keeping watch over their flocks, and told them that the Saviour was born at Bethlehem, in order that they might go and adore Him ; and ponder that He did not give these tidings to the learned and noble, nor to the rich and powerful, because the former would not have believed them, and the latter would not have left their comforts and enjoyments to

come and worship Him ; but He gave them to the simple shepherds, because God manifests Himself to those who serve Him with simplicity and good-will, leaving the wise ones of the age in dryness and obscurity. Derive thence a desire to serve God with simplicity and humble good-will, and to esteem those humble persons who serve Him like these shepherds. Ponder, moreover, that, as St. Gregory says, the angel appeared to the shepherds when they were keeping watch over their flocks, because God visits and reveals Himself to those pastors and superiors who watch over His sheep, caring for those that He has committed to their charge. Raise thy heart to God, and beg of Him with tenderness of soul to arouse thee with His light, in order that thou mayst not sleep or be negligent in thy ministry and office, in order that thou mayst not be unworthy of His visitation.

Second Point.—Consider the signs given them by the angel whereby to discover the Saviour—namely, that they would find an infant wrapped in swaddling-clothes and laid in a manger, all which are mysterious signs and full of instruction. He whom the heavens cannot contain, a little child ! He who is the Word of the Father, a voiceless infant ! Because Adam, says St. Bernard, feared the voice of God in Paradise, and hid himself away from Him, Christ comes in silence and without voice that man may fear no more and approach Him. O Lord, Thou art no longer to be feared but to be loved ! grant me grace to love Thee and to draw near to Thee ! He is swathed, because in this His coming He has His hands bound in order not to chastise the sinner, and loosened, to do him good. He is wrapped in swaddling-clothes, His majesty hidden and obscured beneath the veil of our humanity, in order that men may not dread to converse with Him, as Moses covered his face that the children of Israel might treat with him. He is laid in a manger, who sits on the sublime throne of glory in His greatness and majesty, teaching thus to all lessons of humility, meekness, love, and charity, which He mani-

feasts alike towards all. Learn, then, what this Divine Master teaches thee, and draw thence affections of meekness, patience, benignity, mercy, humility, and charity towards thy brethren.

Third Point.—Consider how the shepherds, on receiving the joyful tidings brought them by the angel, encouraged each other to go and see the Saviour; and they went with haste and found Him, as the angel had said, and they worshipped and adored Him with equal faith and devotion: in which thou hast much to meditate and to learn,—1st, to give credence to Divine revelations, as did these shepherds to the angel; 2d, to put the inspirations of God into execution, and to respond to His holy vocation when He calls thee to His service, with the fervour and diligence used by these shepherds; 3d, to invite thy neighbours and excite them to the service of God, as these good shepherds encouraged each other to go to Bethlehem and acknowledge and serve God; 4th, to trust in Him, that if thou dost seek Him thou wilt find Him as they did. Raise thy heart to God, and beseech the Lord to call thee and enlighten thee as He did these shepherds, and to strengthen thee with His grace in order that thou mayst obey Him; seek Him, and serve Him as they did.

Fourth Point.—Travel with the shepherds to the stable of Bethlehem, enter with them into the presence of the Redeemer, adore and worship Him in their company; see the gifts they offer Him, and offer Him thy heart; note the return of joy and devotion that they receive from the hand of the Lord, and expect thou the like, for He never sends away empty those that serve Him with their hearts. Contemplate the joy and consolation of their souls, and the lightness of heart with which they returned to their herds after having adored the Saviour, and how they found their flocks entire and improved; for he that employs himself in the service of God never loses thereby, but rather receives increase, not only in spiritual things, but likewise in temporal ones.

THIRTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

ON THE MANNER IN WHICH OUR LADY AND ST. JOSEPH
EMPLOYED THESE DAYS.

First Point.—Four different sorts of persons visited Our Lady during these days : the angels, the shepherds, Holy Simeon, and Anna the prophetess, as described by St. Luke, chapter the second, and in accordance with this thou shalt meditate in the four points of this meditation : 1st. Consider the jubilation of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph when they saw Christ adored by the angels on earth as He is in heaven, the thanks they rendered to the Eternal Father for the honour He did to His Son, and their gratitude towards the angels for the humility with which they acknowledged Him to be their God and Lord : rejoice to have such a Redeemer and at seeing Him worshipped by the angelic spirits, congratulate a thousand times the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph, and learn to reverence and serve God with thy whole body and thy mind like the angels of heaven.

Second Point.—Consider how the shepherds entered into that poor stable to adore Christ, and take note of the words they addressed to the most Holy Virgin His Mother ; how in the simple language of their honest hearts they congratulated her on the Son that God had given her, and narrated to her what had occurred to them, what the angel had told them, and what “ a multitude of the heavenly army ” they had seen in the air singing canticles, and “ Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to men of good will ; ” and, as St. Luke relates : “ Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart ; ” and the shepherds told unto many the things they had heard and seen. In which thou hast much to learn and to think on ; in the simplicity with which the shepherds offered their congratulations to Our Lady, learn thou also to offer her thine with thy whole will ; meditate the reply

of the Holy Virgin, and the words so full of humility and gratitude she addressed to them ; and the consolation which their souls experienced at hearing them ; and endeavour to render thyself worthy to hear the like from her mouth, and to be grateful to all who do thee service. Learn from this Lady to preserve in thy heart and like her interiorly to meditate on the Divine mysteries ; and from the shepherds to communicate to thy neighbours the graces that the Lord bestows on thee, when it is advantageous for their advancement ; and beg of the Lord grace to accomplish all this.

Third Point.—Consider how St. Luke says, that the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph were full of admiration at the things that were said of the child God (of that diminished Lord), and see that if thou dost not marvel at His mysteries, it is because thou meditatest them not, being occupied in other worldly things, nor dost hear what is preached concerning Him, because thou art distracted with the business of this earth. Conceive hence a firm resolution to put aside all that is worldly in order to attend to what is celestial and Divine ; listen and meditate what Holy Simeon said of Christ, namely, that this Child was born for the ruin and resurrection of many in Israel ; for the ruin of the wicked who received Him not, and the resurrection of those who received and worshipped Him and followed in His footsteps : place thy hand on thy breast and consider whether the Saviour is born for the good or for the ruin of thy soul : see how thou hast received Him, accepted His example, and followed in His footsteps, weep and bewail thy carelessness and the tepidity thou hast till now exhibited, and begin from to-day with fervour to enter His holy service, in order that the honey which God has given thee for the good of thy soul be not through thy malice changed into poison.

Fourth Point.—Consider how God ordained, that a holy woman, a widow, chaste, learned, very mortified, and much given to prayer and attendance in the temple, should also come to acknowledge Christ and publish His

praises to all Israel, in order that the Redeemer might be known and adored by all classes of persons, and that no excuse should be left that people, because knowing Him they would not acknowledge Him : consider what an echo all these things found in the heart of His most Holy Mother, and how she praised and magnified God for them all : rejoice that He should be extolled and glorified on earth as He is in heaven, and beg of all creatures to praise and exalt Him and to supply what is wanting in thee.

THIRTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the last Day of the Year.

ON THE BREVITY OF LIFE.

First Point.—Consider Christ our Lord just born and weeping in the manger ; and if thou dost inquire the cause of His tears, thou wilt find that it is less from the cold and the inclemency of the weather that He is suffering, than from thy neglect and the forgetfulness in which thou livest of thy soul's welfare ; and that He comes into the world to arouse thee by the cries and lamentations He addresses to thee from that hard bed, that thou mayst take heed of thy danger and look to thyself, and abandoning the road of perdition thou shouldst enter on that of salvation, for as St. Paul says, "The grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men instructing us that, denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, and justly, and godly, in this world" (Titus ii.), adjusting our lives to the law of God, for which reason, without losing sight of the example set thee by so illustrious a master ; since we have reached the last day and the end of the year, consider that thou hast so much less time to live ; observe how it has slipped by unnoticed, and that in like manner will

those that remain to thee slip past and thou knowest not how many or of what sort they will be : contemplate how life passes ceaselessly away, and that like a vessel driven before the wind in which the travellers go along eating, drinking, and sleeping, yet alway journeying onwards, so thy life runs on without interruption, eating or sleeping, watching or toiling, thou art ever carried onwards without an instant of delay, and even whilst thou art reading this thy life is being spent ; from which thou shouldst draw great fervour and courage to endure all trials for God and for thy salvation, seeing how brief they all are ; and also to labour for thy advancement and to increase thy wealth of good works, recognising how little time is left thee in which to earn immortal riches.

Second Point.—Consider how many who began to run the course of this year like thyself have remained on the road and have not reached its close as thou hast : look back and see them in their graves, eaten by worms, their part in the drama of life concluded, and not lasting as they anticipated all through the year ; see their plans derided, their labours wasted, their properties confiscated in the excise of death and enjoyed by others, their honours carried away as a vapour, all past as a shadow, and scarce a memory of them left ; and recognise the fragility of this life and its deceptions, and that all is madness, save to seek after what is eternal and will endure for ever. Consider what would have been thy feelings hadst thou remained on the road like them, and that in a little while it will be with thee as it has been with them ; compare time with the eternity which will never end ; cast thine eyes along that year which will commence from the day of thy death, either in heaven or in hell, and will have no ending, nor be succeeded by another, but will last, and continue without termination, or limit, conclusion, end, or last day, whilst God is God ; and thou wilt discover that the longest life in this miserable world is as a moment in regard to eternity and as a drop of water to the ocean ; and cry out with admiration and

weep to behold the blindness of men, since for the sake of enjoying an instant of life so brief and deceitful, they lose the real and eternal life; beg of the Lord not to permit thee to fall into such a snare, but to give thee light and grace to despise what is temporal and to covet only what is eternal.

Third Point.—Cast thine eyes over the events of the past year and see the changes that have taken place, the various occurrences, the disasters and misfortunes, the losses of some, the rise and advancement of others: enter into thyself and consider what has befallen thee in this short space of time, the variety of feelings thou hast experienced, now joy, then sorrow, now contentment, then discontent, the risings of anger and displeasure, the good and the evil days, what decay of health; what diminution of thy temporal and spiritual profit, what occasions of impatience with thyself and with other men, what variety of weather, and the instability of all things that are beneath the heavens, and thou wilt find that there are fewer changes in the moon, nor does the cameleon show as many colours in the day, as there have been variations in the emotions of thy heart in the days that thou hast lived of this year; and learn therefrom to be no longer deluded as to the value of temporal goods, and to awaken within thee desires of despising a life so treacherous and changeable, to rely firmly on what is true and enduring, and to embrace the spiritual and holy life taught us by the Son of God from the time of His coming into this world until His leaving it. Contemplate the tranquillity of soul enjoyed by the servants of God, resigned and secure in His holy will without other will than that of God; see how with them though years slip by they are not lost, because they are fruitful of good works which they will enjoy for ever; but to the wicked they are lost, because their time is spent for naught, and thus their years are empty and their days vain: remember that the time past will never return, and that thou wilt never see again this year that has

gone by, and resolve to profit by the one that God now gives thee for the advancement of thy soul ; weep over the time thou hast lost, and amend thy life for the future.

Fourth Point. — Gaze on Christ our Lord in the manger, enter by meditation into His breast, and contemplate how, from the first instant of His conception, and from the day and hour of His coming into the world to the last moment of His life, He never ceased to labour and to merit without losing an instant of time. Consider the acts of thanksgiving that He made to His Eternal Father for the favours He had bestowed on all men, and those of love and charity which He performed, loving Him most intensely and offering Himself in holocaust to His holy service : the acts He made in His heart of zeal for God's glory, desiring and entreating that He might be glorified and exalted without end, and for the good of souls desiring and supplicating the Father for their salvation, and already from the manger offering His life for His brethren. Great is the lesson, O my soul ! that this Divine doctor from heaven delivers to thee on the good use of time, and of the years He gives thee wherein to serve Him ; hearken to His doctrine, contemplate Him, learn and forget not His teaching, deriving thence a most firm purpose of imitating Him, and of recovering in the years of life that may yet be granted thee, what thou hast lost in this and past years by thy carelessness and indolence, and solicit grace to amend thy life for the future, despising the world, and henceforth walking in His footsteps as though this next year were to be the last of thy life.

*FIRST MEDITATION.**(First week after Christmas.)**For the Octave of Christmas.*

ON THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD.

The evangelist St. Luke says (Luke ii.) that eight days being accomplished from the birth of Christ He was circumcised, and they called Him Jesus, the name which the angel gave Him before He was conceived.

First Point.—Consider how punctual was the obedience of Christ in submitting Himself to the law which did not bind Him, and fulfilling it most exactly, in order that thou mayst learn to submit thyself and carry out with great punctuality the Divine law, and the precepts and rules which on so many accounts thou art bound to observe. The first act of Christ after His birth was done in obedience to the law; for as Adam commenced by disobedience the perdition of the world, so Christ began its restoration by obedience, giving us proof of the importance of this virtue, and that by it thou mayst repair what thou hast lost through independence and contempt of the law. Beg it of God with thy whole heart, and prepare thyself after the example of the Saviour to obey most punctually all that is commanded thee, even though it be most arduous and toilsome, considering how Jesus obeyed so painful and severe a precept at so tender an age, and at the cost of His very blood.

Second Point.—Consider the profound humility and most ardent charity which shine forth in His circumcision, since being sanctity itself, in whom sin is impossible, He chose to assume the stigma of a sinner and to humble Himself to the very depths, being esteemed defiled He who is purity itself, accepting the remedy of our wounds

which touch Him not, and shedding the precious balm of His blood for the cure and remedy of our infirmities. Blush at perceiving thy pride who, being a sinner, wouldst appear just, and being sick with the wounds of so many sins as thou hast committed in thy life, dost yet refuse to take the medicine of salutary penance for them. Cast thyself at His feet, and give Him endless thanks for the favour that He does thee ; learn to humble thyself in His presence, and to set aside all worldly esteem ; gather up with devotion into thy innermost heart the drops of that precious blood, and entreat the Lord with tears that they may not fall to the ground and be lost, but that bathing thy soul they may purify it from all stain of sin or imperfection.

Third Point.—Christ is circumcised when eight days old to teach us to embrace, as St. Paul says (Rom. ii. 4), spiritual circumcision, even though it cost us pain, circumcising with the knife of mortification the superfluities of the fleshly appetites and of the bodily senses. Circumcise, then, in imitation of Christ, thy tongue of idle and angry words against thy neighbour, thy ears of the vain and curious things of the age, thine eyes of dangerous sights, thy touch of luxuries and delicacies, thy taste of superfluous and costly food, thy feet from unnecessary outgoings and useless steps, thy hands from gifts and works less adjusted to the holy law of God, and the powers of thy understanding, thy memory, and thy will, from thoughts and affections less well ordered. Place thy hand on thy breast and see what goes on in thy heart, and cut off in imitation of Christ all the superfluities of thy life, and what might be to thee an occasion of sin or impede thee on the road of perfection, remembering what the Saviour says, that if it were necessary we should pluck out an eye from our head, or strike off a hand or a foot in order that it should not obstruct the road to heaven, where it is better to enter circumcised of these members, than with them to go down into hell.

Fourth Point.—Consider the pain endured by the

most Holy Virgin at beholding the suffering of her most sacred Son, the tears she shed, the compassion she felt, and how she gathered up the blood and the precious flesh of Christ and preserved it as a priceless treasure, offering it to the Eternal Father for the redemption of the world, and with the greater affection if, as some maintain, she herself circumcised Him with unspeakable courage, showing herself submissive in so painful and difficult an obedience. Accompany the Queen of angels on this occasion, compassionating with her in all that the Saviour suffers on thy account; grieve at His pain, and offer His precious blood to the Eternal Father in sacrifice for thy sins, and offer thine own also, if it be necessary to shed it in His service. Learn courage from the Queen of Heaven to sacrifice to God the sons of thy heart with the knife of mortification, and beseech her to obtain for thee from the Divine Majesty favour and grace to follow her example, and to circumcise thy spirit and thy flesh from all inordinate affections.

SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR AND AMENDMENT OF OUR PAST LIFE.

First Point.—Consider how many persons who were alive at this time last year making plans for the future, expecting to see this and many future years, and yet who have not lived to see it, because death cut them off in the midst of their projects, and when they least expected it, and they have been long rotting in their tombs; whilst their wealth, position, and dignities are possessed by others, and of them scarce a memory remains; reflect briefly on those thou hast known, and see in what condi-

tion are their bodies in the grave, and where may their souls be at this moment.

Second Point.—Continue thence to meditate how no year passes during which many persons do not die, for the harvest of death is certain, rain or no rain ; and thus in this year in which thou enterest, many of those now alive will die, and of those who have seen the beginning of the year some will not see its termination or the commencement of the next ; then turn thine eyes on thyself, and consider how thou knowest not whether thou wilt be one of these ; it is certain that thou art mortal like those that are gone before, and that thou hast no assurance of God exempting thee from death, and that on thee may fall the lot that befell them, and thou mayst never see next year, as they have not seen this one, and be then as they are now in the grave, thy goods divided amongst others without a remembrance being left of thee.

Third Point.—See then how important it is to thee to live a well-regulated life ; imagine that this is the last year of thy life, and that in it thou wilt have to give an account of thy stewardship, and see how thou wouldst render it if God called upon thee to give it at once ; and since thou hast not one hour assured to thee make thyself safe at once, and put not God off any longer, but set the accounts of thy life in order as though thou hadst now to deliver them to His Divine Majesty.

Fourth Point.—The ancients represented Janus the god of the year with two faces, the one turned to the year that was past, the other towards the one commencing, because the prudent man looks at his past as well as at his future life. Reflect how thou hast lived during the last and other past years, and how thou shouldst live in the new one ; consider that God gives it thee in order that thou mayest repair the past and recover in this year what thou hast lost in previous ones. Contemplate how thou hast lived until now and how thou shouldst live henceforth ; take in the presence of God rigorous account of thy past life, consider thy spiritual wealth,

has it been increased, or diminished? and see how important it is to thee to advance it; for thou hast no other true riches than this: reflect, what would not those who are dead have given to live this one year more, and what works they would perform if God granted them to return to life. Consider that He concedes to thee the favour He denies to them, and look on thyself as one come back from the other world only to recover the riches of thy soul, and make haste to serve God with fervour; give Him millions of thanks for the mercy He bestows on thee; humble thyself in His presence, and begin to serve Him with all diligence and perfection.

THIRD MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE NAME OF JESUS.

First Point.—Consider what the Evangelist says—"His name was called Jesus, which was called by the angel before He was conceived in the womb" (Luke ii.), in which contemplate the excellence of this name, since it came from heaven by the ministry of an angel—the Eternal Father sending it to His Son, as a jewel of great price, and so great reverence, that, as St. Paul tells us, each time it is pronounced the angels in heaven, men on earth, and the devils in hell, bend their knees at the invocation; from whence perceive the esteem in which thou shouldst hold this most holy name, and the reverence with which thou shouldst pronounce it, and listen to it when thou hearest it, considering that the greatest respect is less than that which it deserves.

Second Point.—Consider how at the same moment Christ is circumcised, humbling Himself to the very utmost, His Eternal Father exalts Him, honouring Him

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with this name, which is above every other name, in order to convince thee that in proportion as thou shalt humble thyself after the example of Christ, God will exalt thee as He did Him ; and that if thou dost exalt thyself by vain-glory, He will humble thee to the very dust, for it is written, "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he that exalteth himself shall be humbled."

Third Point.—Consider what the spouse of the canticles says of this holy name, that it is "as oil poured out" (Cant. i.) She calls it oil, as St. Bernard tells us, because it illuminates, anoints and sustains; it illuminates by the light it sheds on the road to heaven amidst the darkness of temptations, which it dissipates in the souls of them that invoke it; avail thyself of it in thine, and fail not to arm thyself with its power in all the battles which thou sustainest against Satan, the father of darkness and the enemy of light. It anoints, because it is the medicine of souls, which it cures of all their ills ; and it sustains, because it is a spiritual food which gives life and nourishment to the soul. Give thanks to God our Lord, who has given thee so sweet, so efficacious, and so easy a remedy, and fail not to use it in all thy diseases ; and since He has given thee this celestial manna of His most holy name, for the nourishment of thy soul, and to give thee strength for the journey to heaven, prize and reverence it, and profit by its virtue to sustain therewith the life of grace, and preserve it eternally.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the spouse of the canticles not only calls this most holy name *oil* for the reasons given above, but likewise *poured out*, because Christ our Redeemer pours out on our souls, by means of His holy name, the treasure of His gifts, as is shown in the circumcision, when on receiving the name He sheds His most precious blood, in order that sinners may gather it up and avail themselves of its infinite power ; give Him many thanks for His so great liberality. Rejoice to possess so generous a God who gives thee even His very blood and His Name so sublime and exalted, that in

it He bestows on us the rich treasures of His grace ; and see that thou remain not poor and indigent by thy neglect in the midst of such abundance : the angels, men, and all creatures share in the inestimable riches that God pours out through this name of Jesus. Open the gates of thy heart, cleanse it from all stain, and entreat the Lord with the greatest tenderness not to leave thee empty when He showers His treasures on all.

FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE OFFICE OF SAVIOUR.

First Point.—The name of Jesus is given Him because He is to save His people from their sins. Consider that the precious jewel of His holy name was not conferred on Christ gratuitously, but accompanied with the obligation of saving the world at the cost of His blood, and of intense sufferings, labours, and of the death of the cross, in order to convince thee that God does not give His benefits without the condition of enduring much for His love and at the cost of suffering. And if He acted thus towards His own Son, will He not do in like manner with others ? God wills no one to be idle in this world, nor given over to sensuality and luxury ; He wills that we shall all labour and suffer to merit the beatitude of His glory. Offer thyself, therefore, to the Divine Majesty with entire resignation for whatever He purposes to do with thee ; and if He confer some favour upon thee, give Him thanks, and prepare thyself to be patient in the trials and labours which He offers thee at the same time, and say to Him, with the prophet, “ My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready ” (Ps. v. 6). It is prepared

and disposed for Thy service, and to suffer for Thy love whatever it may be Thy good pleasure and holy will to send me, &c.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ is thy Saviour, and with what love and charity He undertook to save thee when thou hadst done nothing for Him and didst offend Him ; be grateful to Him for His immense pity towards thee, and acquire very great confidence of obtaining pardon of thy sins, since thou hast a Saviour who loves thee better than thou lovest thyself. Contemplate how, as soon as He was born, He opened His veins, and began to shed His blood in order to wash therewith the stains of thy sins ; and whereas one single drop of it sufficed for the redemption of the world ; such was the abundance of His redemption, that He shed it for thee many times, and so copiously that it ran in streams to the ground. Acknowledge this great benefit of thy loving Redeemer, and faint not in thy trials, nor lose courage, even if thou seest thyself submerged in an ocean of sins ; but rather raise thy heart to Him, and confide in His infinite pity that He will show mercy to thee, will pardon thy sins, and give thee Paradise, if thou dost weep over them with true contrition.

Third Point.—Consider that He is called Saviour, because He is to save His people from their sins. Others under the old law bore this name, because they saved their people from the slavery of men and the oppression of their foes, bringing them out of Egypt, and conveying them to the promised land. All of these conferred temporal benefits on men without any personal sacrifice. But Christ is the true Saviour, who at the sacrifice of His own blood brought His people out of the Egypt of their sins and from the bondage of Satan, and introduced them into the true land of promise, which is heaven. Cast thyself at His feet, and with all the tenderness of thy soul, entreat of Him that, as He liberates all, He will not leave thee captive, but will rescue thee from the slavery of the devil and the chains of thy sins, and protect and defend

thee until He conducts thee into the heavenly country of everlasting beatitude.

Fourth Point.—Lastly, consider that if the name of Christ was not an empty title, nor given to Him in vain, so also He has not given thee thine, which is a participation of His, as an empty form, nor in vain. Thou art called a Christian—that is, a disciple of Christ, and a soldier of His army, because thou art to fight under His standard, follow in His footsteps, and strive valiantly against the world, against hell, and against thyself, waging a fierce war against the flesh. Rest thine eyes on the Redeemer, and contemplate at leisure how He carries out the obligations imposed by His name, then turn them on thyself, and see how thou dost fulfil those that are involved in thine; grieve over thy negligence, repair the past, and solicit His grace in order to accomplish thy duty in the future; reflect that it cost Christ His blood to be the Saviour of others, because it is to cost us ours to save ourselves.

FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday and Vigil of the Epiphany.

Herod being dead (Matt. ii), the angel appeared in Egypt to St. Joseph whilst sleeping, and commanded him to return to the land of Israel; but as Archelaus, son of Herod, reigned in Judea, fearing his anger, by order of the angel he went to Nazareth, fulfilling what was prophesied, namely, that Jesus should be called a Nazarite.

First Point.—Consider the providence God exercises over His chosen ones, and how He never forgets them, but cares for them with greater vigilance than they can use on their own behalf. Contemplate the peace and tranquillity with which the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph

lived in Egypt amidst idolatrous Gentiles, exiled from their country, leaving to God all solicitude about their persons, who took care to console them and terminate their banishment when opportune for His service ; and learn to confide in God in thy trials, and to cast all thy anxieties into the hands of His providence. He will take care of thee and console thee, and bring thee out of them when most advantageous for thee and for His service.

Second Point.—Consider, secondly, the journeys of these holy travellers, the regret of the Egyptians at their departure, the joy of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph at returning to their own land, the heavenly conversations that passed between them on the road, the odour of sanctity they left everywhere ; and accompany them on their journey, offering thyself to their service, and rejoicing in their society. See how the saints are received and esteemed everywhere, even by the idolaters of Egypt, because they everywhere do good to all, and give illustrious examples of sanctity. Learn thou also to do the like by the virtuous tenour of thy life ; and even if thou findest thyself amongst idolaters and sinners, endeavour to be like the sun, which is not stained by the mire but enlightens and purifies it, and so must thou do with those who are steeped in vice, illuminating, instructing, and purifying them with the light and teaching of the good example of thy life, without being soiled with the mire of evil habits.

Third Point.—Consider how soon was the joy of these holy exiles destroyed, when, on arriving in their country, they found there fresh dangers to the life of the Holy Child ; and reflect that there are dangers everywhere, even in the land of Israel, chosen by God for His inheritance, and that Christ was in greater peril amongst His relatives and friends than in the exile of Egypt ; and do not consider thyself secure in any place whatsoever, but always walk with precaution, for thy salvation, and not to lose Christ ; and believe the safest place for thee to be

where God places thee, as was the case with His most blessed Son. Ponder how they feared Archelaus, son of Herod, because sons usually inherit the habits of their parents, together with their blood, and pray God for all. Be cautious whom thou trustest; withdraw from dangerous occasions, as Christ withdrew from His enemies; expect not miracles, but follow Providence, the holy inspirations sent thee by God, and the dictates of virtue and prudence.

Fourth Point.—Christ went to Nazareth for the accomplishment of the prophecies made by the prophets, that He would be called a Nazarite. Here consider how we should submit to Divine decrees, because all that God has ordained concerning us must be fulfilled. Resist not His will, because it must be done in all things, and it must be accomplished in thee. Humble thyself, then, before His Majesty, and say, Thy will be done in me, O Lord, as it is in heaven, and may all things be accomplished which Thou hast ordained concerning me. Ponder that Christ is called a Nazarite, which signifies a religious person, set apart and flowering; because if thou be a religious it is becoming that thou shouldst flourish in all kinds of virtues, and be set apart from all worldly business and entirely dedicated to the service of God. This is thy duty; see how thou fulfillest it, and beg of the Lord grace to cast aside all earthly things, to be solely occupied with His service, and to fulfil the duties of thy state and profession.

SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the Feast of the Epiphany.

The sacred Evangelist says (Matt. ii.), that when Christ was born, wise men guided by a star came from the

East to adore Him. King Herod and all his court were troubled thereat. He assembled the council, and by its direction sent them to Bethlehem. The star they had seen in the East appeared again, to the great delight of their souls. They arrived, and adored Jesus, offering Him gifts, and, warned by Heaven, they returned by another road into their own country.

First Point.—Consider how God called to worship His Son, in the first place, the angels and shepherds, and afterwards the kings and wise men, Anna, the prophetess, and Simeon the priest, and how He brought some of all conditions to adore Christ, because, like the sun, He is born for all; and He calls all, and thee also, to come into His service, without leaving thee any excuse on account of poverty or riches, because thou art noble or of low birth, secular or religious—He calls all, He is born for all. Refuse not to seek Him and to serve Him, but rather offer thyself with all diligence to His service.

Second Point.—Consider how He called these kings by means of a star; and at the first discovery of its rays they resolved to leave their country, their vassals, their wealth, and conveniences to take so long and perilous a journey to come and worship Christ, and offer themselves to His service. Learn thou from their fervent obedience to come to Christ, and to seek Him at the cost of whatever labour, as soon as He calls thee by the star of His inspiration, and at the first light of thy vocation. Lay thy hand on thy breast and consider how many times He has called thee, and how often thou hast resisted Him and turned a deaf ear to His voice. Blush that Gentiles should have the advantage over thee in responding to Him and serving Him, and put off no more, but with prompt courage and a submissive soul say with Samuel, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth" (1 Kings i. 3); and with St. Paul, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts ix.) I here offer myself to Thy service to be Thy slave.

Third Point.—Consider how, when they reached Jeru-

saalem, the capital of King Herod, the star vanished, and when they left the city it reappeared, and guided them till it introduced them into the presence of Christ ; because the light of heaven and the inspirations of God are lost to the soul in the bustle of the court, and are found again on leaving it in solitude and withdrawal from worldly business. The gift, devotion, and the light to seek Christ are lost in the courts of kings, in their palaces, and in intercourse with their courtiers, and are found away from these in solitude and silence, in recollection and prayer apart with God. Enter into account with thyself, and see dispassionately how many times thou hast lost thy peace of soul, and the light of truth and good purposes of the star of the knowledge of God, and of esteem for eternal things, which guided thee heavenward, on entering the court, and in frequenting towns, and occupying thyself with worldly concerns ; and since the remedy consists in flying from them, resolve with these holy kings to abandon the trammels and bustle of the world, and to leave all worldly concerns, and withdraw to occupy thyself about the affair of greatest importance to thee, which is that of thy salvation, and thou shalt find the star of devotion and the light of truth, which shall lead thee into the presence of the Lord, and unite thee to Him. Lastly, beg of God to grant thee the grace and strength to put in practice a counsel so profitable to thy soul.

Fourth Point.—Consider, in that blessed stable, the child Christ in the arms of the most Blessed Virgin, accompanied by St. Joseph, and the holy kings, prostrate at his feet, adoring Him as their God and offering Him their gifts. Enter by meditation into their hearts, and contemplate the delight they experienced when, after so long and toilsome a journey, they found the treasure they sought, and their eyes beheld the desired of ages. They were never tired of gazing on Him, bathed in an ocean of intense joy. They offered their gifts, and yet more, their hearts, to Christ, to serve Him eternally, and

the Lord bestowed on them in return countless graces and favours, enriching them with faith, hope, charity, fortitude, light, and celestial wisdom, knowledge, and esteem of eternal things, contempt of temporal ones, and an ardent zeal to draw all the world to the knowledge and service of Christ. Hearken with attention to the conversations they had with the most Holy Virgin and with the glorious St. Joseph during the days they remained with them, and draw from this sweet honeycomb the savour of devotion for thy soul. Recognise the importance of following the star of holy inspirations in order to come to Christ, and the joy above all joys they experience who give themselves heartily to His service and to the higher practice of all virtues. Offer thy heart and all thou art and hast to Him, with these holy kings, and thou shalt obtain an eternal reward.

SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday after the Epiphany.

! ON THE COMING OF THE KINGS FROM THE EAST TO
ADORE CHRIST.

First Point.—Consider how, when Christ was born at Bethlehem, a star appeared in the East, which was visible in all countries, and yet only three kings were moved to come and acknowledge Christ, from which thou shouldst ponder, first, how true it is, as the Saviour teaches, that “Many are called but few chosen” (Matt. xx.), since of the multitudes who beheld the star, only three came to serve Christ; and endeavour to be one of the few chosen ones, seeking Him and serving Him in company with these holy kings. Secondly, Ponder the reason why these kings came, which was, because they were learned, and spent

their life in the contemplation of the stars, through which they received light to know Christ. Draw, hence, high esteem for the contemplation of heavenly things, and for the study of sacred writings, since by their means thou mayest acquire light wherewith to know and follow Christ. Thirdly, Reflect how strangers came to adore the Saviour, whilst of His own people, who resided at Jerusalem, not one disturbed himself to go in quest of Him ; in which thou wilt perceive how little reliance can be placed on relationship or human friendship ; and that, when God sees fit, greater assistance is afforded by strangers. Confide in His Divine Majesty and not in frail and deceitful men, in whom, as David says, truth is not. Offer thyself heartily to God, imploring Him to place thee under His protection.

Second Point.—Consider how St. Matthew says, that Herod, on hearing the news of Christ's birth, "was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." Ponder how the kings were not troubled, although they had greater cause at finding themselves in a foreign country without the king they sought. But Herod was troubled because he had an evil conscience ; and the kings were not disturbed because they had good ones ; in which thou wilt perceive that there is no peace or security so great as that which a good conscience bestows, and that even though thou shouldst possess all the kingdoms and dominions of the world, thou wilt be troubled, and in an ocean of anxieties and afflictions if thy conscience reproves thee, whilst, on the contrary, though all the world should arm itself against thee, thou wilt be tranquil and joyful with a peaceful conscience. Solicit grace of God to preserve thy conscience pure from all sin and cleansed from every stain, whereby thou wilt experience joy and security in all thine actions.

Third Point.—The Evangelist says, that they found Christ "with Mary His mother," because He is always to be found with her, and he that has devotion to her has true devotion to Christ in his soul. Ponder how as the

dawn and the sun necessarily following each other, so is it with the devotion to Christ and His mother. Establish this devotion in thy heart. Cast thyself at her feet with these holy kings, and entreat of her to shelter thee beneath her mantle, accepting thee for her child. Consider the joy her heart experienced when her eyes beheld the first-fruits of the Gentiles and the establishment of the kingdom of her Son. Congratulate her rejoicing in her joy, and inflame thyself with lively desires of extending the dominion of Christ to the utmost of thy power, by bringing many souls to His service.

Fourth Point.—Contemplate these holy kings prostrate at the feet of Christ, offering Him with most devoted hearts their abundant gifts, namely, gold, frankincense and myrrh ; and accompanying them with the affections of thy soul, prostrate thyself also at the Saviour's feet ; offer Him the gold of charity, loving Him with thy whole heart and thy neighbours for His sake, succouring them in their necessities with all liberality ; the incense of prayer, giving Him thanks for the benefits thou hast received, and praising God, unceasingly ; and the myrrh of mortification restraining thine appetites, macerating thy flesh and mortifying thy desires for His love ; and if thou be a religious, offer Him in these gifts the three essential vows of thy profession—the gold, in the vow of poverty, renouncing all wealth for God, the frankincense, in that of obedience, offering thyself in sacrifice to His Divine will, and the myrrh, in that of chastity, preserving thy soul and body from the corruption of sin, and living in utmost purity, giving no place in thy heart to evil thoughts ; mentally review thy five senses and the powers of thy soul, and offer to God all thy actions, thoughts, words, and works, and implore His grace to fulfil all thy obligations and to persevere to the end in His service.

*EIGHTH MEDITATION.**For the first Sunday after the Epiphany.*

ON THE LOSS OF THE CHILD JESUS.—(LUKE ii.)

St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin went up, as was their custom, to Jerusalem to celebrate the Pasch, and they took with them their most precious Son, Who, without saying anything to them, remained at Jerusalem. They sought Him with sorrow for three days amongst their relations and friends, and found Him in the Temple in the midst of the doctors; and He returned with them to Nazareth.

First Point.—Consider how Christ and His Holy Mother teach us to frequent the churches, to attend festivals, and to preserve the holy practices of our elders, by going themselves so many miles to celebrate the feast in the Temple of Jerusalem; and learn how thou shouldst employ the festivals of the church, not in eating and drinking, in pastimes and enjoyments, as the apostle St. Paul tells us, but in praying in the church, offering to God the most holy sacrifice of the Mass, assisting at the Divine offices, and hearkening to the preaching of His Word, which are the works by which God is served, and by which thou shouldst honour His feasts for His greater glory and the good of thy soul.

Second Point.—Consider how the most Holy Virgin and the glorious St. Joseph lost Christ in the Temple, although through no fault of theirs, in order that thou shouldst abide in the fear of losing Him, never feeling secure in any place however holy it may be, because in any place thou mayst lose Him if thou be careless in His service. The first angel lost Him in heaven, and Adam in Paradise, although such holy places. What wilt thou do, then, frail and miserable as thou art, in the midst of the dangers of the world if thou be not wary? Live in fear, and tremble

lest thou lose God ; cry out to His Divine Majesty, entreating Him with humility to sustain thee with His hand, that thou mayst never lose Him nor in any way withdraw thyself from His presence.

Third Point.—Consider the sorrow and tears with which the most Holy Virgin and St. Joseph sought the most Holy Child. Enter by meditation into their hearts, and contemplate the alarm that filled them during those three days, doubting lest He had fallen into the hands of the servants of the king who sought Him to take away His life. See how Mary rested not one moment, day or night, seeking Him everywhere, finding no repose anywhere on account of the great love they bore Him, for He was the rest of their souls. Lay thy hand on thy heart and see how many times thou hast lost God, not like the Blessed Virgin, without fault of thine ; and thou hast no sorrow for thy loss, because thou hast no love for Him. Thou dost eat, drink, rest, and take recreation whilst this Divine Lord is lost to thee. The greatest evil to thee of this loss is, that thou dost not feel the privation. The angels feel it ; the saints weep, and all creatures lament thy loss ; and thou alone dost pass on without sorrow, who art the one most interested, and who shouldst feel it most deeply. Accompany, then, my soul, these holy spouses ; journey with them in quest of thy God and Lord, and beseech them both to give thee some of their love wherewith to know how to seek Him, and leave them not until thou hast found Him and given Him shelter and welcome in thy heart.

Fourth Point.—Consider the joy and delight experienced by the Holy Virgin and the glorious St. Joseph when they found the child Jesus in the Temple, in the midst of the doctors, and behold how, on their arrival, He took leave of the doctors and came at once to the arms of His Mother, uniting Himself most intimately with her. Approach with reverence, and congratulate her on having found the treasure she had lost ; and contemplate that Immaculate Lamb, with His arms suspended

around the neck of His Mother, their hearts conversing, and their eyes shedding sweet tears, flowing from the joy of their souls. Gather up those pearls which fall from their eyes—let them not fall to the ground, but carry them to thy heart, to wash therewith the stains of thy imperfections; and learn to know the joy and delight a soul experiences when she finds her God, and enkindle in thy soul lively flames of fervent desire to seek Him and find Him, and never more to leave Him.

NINTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON WHAT CHRIST DID DURING THOSE THREE DAYS.

First Point.—Consider how Christ remained in the Temple without warning His Holy Mother, or the glorious St. Joseph thereof, notwithstanding the grief that He knew they would therefore have to endure. But He hid Himself from their eyes in order to manifest their constancy, to purify their love, and to give fresh increase to their crowns; because oftentimes God withdraws from our eyes, without fault of ours, in order that we may arouse ourselves and become more fervent in His service, and in order that our crown may be increased. Remember this lesson, and let not thy heart fail thee if thou find Him not in prayer, but rather let His absence excite thee to seek Him with greater fervour after the example of the most Holy Virgin Mary.

Second Point.—The parents of Christ sought Him amidst their relations and friends, thinking that they had invited Him, and they found Him not, because He is not to be found in assemblies, nor amongst relatives, but rather He is frequently lost amidst these, for which reason thou shouldst not seek Him amidst the delights of the

body, nor in exterior consolations which are enjoyed with relations and friends, nor in their assemblies, but rather fly from them, as from occasions of losing thy God. Have recourse to the temple, which is the place of prayer, and there thou wilt find the Lord, and with Him the devotion thou lovest in exterior distractions.

Third Point.—Consider how and in what Christ occupied those three days away from His most Holy Mother, during which, as some holy persons contemplate, He begged His food from door to door, and He found shelter in the porch of the Temple as the poorest of the poor, fulfilling from His youth what He spoke by the mouth of His prophet, “I am poor and needy” (Ps. lxi.) Imagine that He comes to the door of thy house to ask of thee an alms and shelter for the night, and He knocks and calls, and entreats thee to open, as He knocked and called at the door of His holy spouse, saying, “Open to me, my sister” (Cant. v.) Excuse not thyself as she did, nor shut the door against Him, but rather open wide the doors of thy heart, and beseech Him, as Abraham did the pilgrims, to enter into thy poor abode. Offer Him freely all thou hast, even to the very core of thy heart, that He may repose therein a while, and say to Him with affection of soul, Come, Thou Heavenly Pilgrim; enter, Thou poor and needy One on earth, and enrich this poor miserable creature with the inestimable jewels of Thy grace. I here offer Thee my heart, my soul, my life, all that I am or can ever be, to Thy service; suffer no more on my account; go not from door to door, since that of my heart is open to Thee. I well see that it is not a worthy dwelling-place for Thee; but do Thou, O Lord, prepare and improve it, and make it worthy of Thy Person, since Thou canst do so, and I know not how. With these and like expressions give Christ shelter in thy house, and when thou seest Him there, cast thyself at His feet, and arise not from thence until He has enriched thee with heavenly treasures.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the most Holy Virgin

Mary found Christ, our Redeemer, in the midst of the doctors ; for it is amongst those who teach His law and are the light of His Church that He is found when lost. Derive thence great esteem for thy spiritual Fathers, whether confessors or preachers and doctors, and believe that in their advice and direction thou wilt find thy salvation, and light to dissipate thy ignorance and guide thee on the road to heaven : disclose to them thy conscience and the wounds of thy soul, and thou wilt find the remedy of them all ; beg of the Lord His grace to hear and obey them, prizing their advice, as thy duty is. St. Justin, martyr, says that Christ our Lord, from the age of twelve years to that of twenty-nine, divided His time as follows :—From the age of twelve to nineteen years He remained in the society of His parents, assisting them and occupying Himself in good works ; at the age of nineteen He took the dress and profession of the devout Nazarites, in which He lived till twenty-five years old ; from His twenty-fifth to His twenty-ninth year He withdrew into the desert, and followed the monastic life as a hermit, devoting Himself to contemplation and penance ; and at the age of twenty-nine He came out of the desert to the borders of the Jordan, and received baptism from the hand of St. John the Baptist. As we have already considered this last mystery at length, we will proceed from the meditations on the infancy of the Saviour to those on the remainder of His life.

TENTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE INFANCY OF CHRIST.

The sacred Evangelist relates that Christ, at the age of twelve, returned with His holy parents to Nazareth,

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and that He was obedient to them, and grew in age and wisdom before God and men (Luke ii.)

First Point.—Consider how Christ at the age of twelve years tarried in the Temple, leaving His parents in affliction, although He knew their grief, in order to attend to the service of His Eternal Father, and to the good of the souls He had commended to Him, postponing thereto all considerations of flesh and blood, in order to teach thee to leave thy father and mother and all earthly concerns for the service of God, and, when needful, to postpone temporal to spiritual concerns, seeking always the greater glory of God our Lord ; entreat of Him with all tenderness of heart grace to put in practice this counsel ; and grieve much at having sometimes failed therein, imploring the Lord to pardon thee and to give thee strength to amend in the future.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ comported Himself amongst the doctors, not on this occasion alone, but on many others, hearing them and interrogating them, not teaching them or arguing with them as St. Gregory observes, in order to teach us the respect we owe to our teachers, and the modesty and humility which we should manifest towards those who instruct us ; and witnessing the submission with which Christ learnt of the masters whom He taught what they were to say : be ashamed of thy pride who wouldst teach every one, and of the presumption with which thou dost speak.

Third Point.—Consider what the Evangelist St. Luke tells us, that Christ, Son of the Eternal Father, Supreme Wisdom, and Infinite Goodness, was subject and obedient to His parents, and He was so all their lives, respecting and serving them in the cares of the household and in whatsoever they commanded ; consider Him on the one hand in heaven obeyed and worshipped by the angels, and on the other behold Him on earth humbled to the very earth, subject and obedient to men : contemplate at leisure how He obeys them, and in what things He serves them, learn submission, humility, and obedience in all

things great and small, not only towards thy superiors, but to all men for the love of Christ, and say to Him with true contrition : Here, O Lord, I offer myself to obedience for Thy love, grant me grace and strength to serve Thee with my whole heart, and to humble and submit myself to all creatures for Thy sake.

Fourth Point.—St. Luke says that Christ grew in wisdom and in grace in proportion as He grew in age ; and although this is to be understood of exterior wisdom and grace as manifested to men, because in Christ interior and habitual wisdom and grace were infinite and incapable of augmentation ; yet it teaches us ever to increase in virtue as in age, and never to falter or turn back on the road once begun of the divine service. Enter into account with thyself and see what is the wealth of thy soul, and whether it diminishes with thee or whether it augments and goes on increasing with years : cast a glance on thy past life and see what thou hast been and what thou art now, and how much thou shouldst have grown in holiness with the graces and favours that God has continually bestowed on thee, and how ill thou hast corresponded to them, since instead of going forward thou hast receded, and each day thou dost become more tepid, less devout, more independent and less submissive to the will of God. Ponder that had God conferred on another the favours He has bestowed on thee, such a one would have served Him much better and would have increased thereby his spiritual wealth, and tremble lest He withdraw them from thee on account of thy ingratitude, as the unprofitable servant lost the talent with which he would not trade as the others did : throw thyself at the feet of Christ our Lord, and weep with tears of blood over thy ingratitude and negligence ; entreat His pardon for the past and grace to recover what thou hast lost, in thy future life.

*ELEVENTH MEDITATION.**For the Wednesday.*

ON THE YOUTH OF CHRIST.

First Point.—First, let us consider the care bestowed by our Lady and the glorious St. Joseph on the rearing of Christ up to the age of youth, although on account of His infinite virtues it was not needful; but they gave example to fathers of families to be careful in rearing their children and servants in all virtue and holiness, teaching them the holy fear of God, the frequentation of churches, assistance at the divine offices, and the practice of all works of virtue: and take heed of the account thou wilt have to render to God of the souls that He has committed to thee, and beg of Him to grant thee grace to look to thine own as also to theirs, and to fulfil thy duty as thou shouldst.

Second Point.—Consider the silence that Christ kept during the years of His youth, since up to the age of twenty-nine it is not positively known what He did, nor in what His time was employed; it is most certain that He was not idle, because no trace of imperfection was possible in His life; it is also certain that He employed Himself in works excellently befitting His divine Person, and yet He hid them all in order to confound our pride, which seeks ostentation in all things and the praise of men, publishing our works, and endeavouring to procure applause from all. Blush in the presence of Christ, and learn to humble thyself, and to hide what thou dost before the eyes of men, seeking only to be agreeable in those of God our Lord.

Third Point.—Consider what Christ did during the thirty years of His youth. The Evangelist St. Luke says, that He spent them in obeying His parents (Luke ii.); St. Mark tells us, that He assisted St. Joseph in his

trade (Mark vi.): we can well believe that He did both things, and at the same time was occupied in contemplation and works of mercy: wherefore the Evangelist tells us that He grew in wisdom and grace as well as age, before God and men: because each day they discovered more the rays of His sanctity, and the esteem of the world for Him increased. Consider leisurely His modesty, His silence, His composed mien, the gravity of His manners, His discretion at so early an age, His obedience and humility, obeying and assisting His parents in the domestic offices of their household, and learn to copy all these virtues in thy soul; again, consider that small family in a poor house earning their food by the sweat of their brow more perfectly than Adam gained his bread with his sweat, and see them despised by the world, but so prized by God that the heaven of heavens are as naught to Him in their comparison, and offer thyself to assist them, obey, and serve them.

Fourth Point.—Consider what St. Luke tells us, namely, that the Holy Virgin kept in her heart all the words of Christ, in order to teach us also to treasure and meditate on them. Meditate leisurely on the heavenly conversations that Christ had with His Mother and St. Joseph, the thanksgivings that they offered to God, and how they were inflamed with His love by the words of Christ, what mysteries He disclosed to them, how great was the consolation of their hearts and the joy their souls experienced in this sweet and tender intercourse; and learn to keep in thy heart the words of God, as well those He speaks to thee interiorly as those thou hearest from the preachers through whose mouth He speaks to thee; and enter in spirit into that heavenly house, behold the occupations of its inmates, hearken to the words they utter, and consider the peace and concord in which they live; beg of God grace to imitate them and of the most Holy Virgin to admit thee for an inmate, to serve them, assisting and waiting upon them in desire and good will.

TWELFTH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE RELIGIOUS STATE PROFESSED BY CHRIST IN HIS
LIFETIME.

First Point.—Consider how Christ preached during three years by word of mouth, and for thirty years by His example, and ponder how much more efficacious and profitable this manner of preaching is than the former, since Christ employed it for so long a time ; and besides its great utility it is likewise suitable to all, for each one can in his own state of life set a good example to his neighbours by living holily and keeping the holy law of God, and the rules and regulations of His profession with exactitude, and apply this teaching to thyself. See whether thou dost fulfil it, and what example thou givest in thy state of life ; whether thou dost exhort to virtue thereby or scandalise thy neighbour ; whether thou dost attract others to the service of God or keep them away by thy evil behaviour. Consider what an account thou wilt have to render of this to God, and what a heavy charge will lie against thee if some one or many are condemned through thy bad example. Humble thyself and be filled with compunction before God, and implore His grace to follow His teaching and the steps of His most holy life, giving good example in thy state and profession.

Second Point.—Consider how, according to St. Justin Martyr and to Nicephorus Callistus,¹ when Christ our Lord attained the age of nineteen years He embraced the religious profession of the Nazarites, which was the state of greatest perfection under the old law, and consecrated Himself to God by a perpetual vow ;² in which ponder how the Redeemer of the world taught us to aspire

¹ Niceph. lib. xi. cap. ult.

² As shown by us in the second volume of the "Guia de la virtud y la imitacion de Na. Sra.," lib. iv. cap. 16, par. 2.

always to the highest perfection, and not to content ourselves with mediocrity in virtue; because they that aspire not to higher things rarely attain to what is less. Excite thyself by the example of Christ to embrace what is most perfect, and offer thyself to His service in whatsoever it may please Him to employ thee: if He should call thee to the religious state, hearken to His voice and follow Him with eagerness, confident that He will give thee strength for what He requires of thee, and that thou mayst not recede from His service.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ, according to the authors above mentioned, withdrew at the age of twenty-five years into the desert, and remained there until twenty-nine years old, giving Himself up to mortification and penance, and laying the foundations of the hermitical and monastic life which He was to establish in His Church, honouring all conditions and states of life, authorising in His person, and leaving by His example instruction how to live most perfectly in each. Accompany Him in spirit, and let Him not go alone; consider how He exposed Himself to the inclemencies of the weather for thy sake; consider the life He led in the desert, retiring from all human intercourse to enjoy the divine; observe His contemplation and penance, and learn to live for God, withdrawing thyself from all that can impede the progress of thy soul; entreat Him to take thee with Him, to admit thee into His school, and to deign to teach thee, offering thyself for ever to His service. Be grateful to Him for what He endures for thee, and encourage thyself by His example to suffer for His sake whatever presents itself to be endured in thy state of life.

Fourth Point.—Ponder deeply on all that has been said, and see in what thou dost spend the time of thy life accorded to thee by God, in order that thou mayst therein gain heaven: see what are thy works and what they ought to be as those of a disciple of Christ; compare thy life to His, His penance with thy indulgence,

His silence with thy talkativeness, His prayer with thy dissipation, His modesty with thy forwardness, His patience with thy irritability, His obedience with thy independence, His humility with thy pride; blush and abase thyself before Him, and embrace a new method of life; correct thy evil habits by the example of His holy ones, and renew thy fervour, embracing courageously penance, mortification, prayer, silence, and all the virtues which shine forth in His holy life. Entreat Him with tears to pardon the past, and offer thyself to follow Him, and renovate thy manner of life firmly, resolving to die a thousand deaths rather than separate thyself from His service.

THIRTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST.

Christ our only good received baptism in the Jordan from the hand of St. John the Baptist: and the heavens were opened and the voice of the Eternal Father was heard acknowledging Him for His Son, and the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove on His head (Matt. iii.)

First Point. — Consider how, when St. John was preaching the baptism of penance for the remission of sins, Christ, who is purity itself, joined the other sinners, as though He were one of them, and came to receive baptism from the hand of John (Luke iii.) Ponder the humility of the Saviour who chose to appear what He was not, in order to be despised by men, in order to condemn thy pride, who wouldst ever appear greater than thou art in order to be esteemed by the world, dissembling thy faults and boasting thine own praises. See

how different is the road thou followest to the one traversed by the Master of life, and dread thy condemnation if thou changest it not. Weep, prostrate at His feet, thy most empty vanity, and say to Him from thy heart: Lord, I am not worthy to raise my eyes to gaze on thee, nor to remain in thy presence, for I am haughtiness itself. Pardon my ignorance, and give me grace to follow the path of Thy humility, &c.

Second Point.—Consider the debate that arose between Christ and St. John as to which was to baptise the other, the creature holding himself unworthy to baptise the Creator to whom he ultimately gave way, baptising Him in order to obey His will. Ponder how different are the debates of men whose disputes are ever about earthly interests, either for riches or honours, as to who shall be preferred or be the greater, which is a species of folly, for each one is what he is before God and no more; in whose eyes he is the greatest who in his own appreciation is the least, and who humbles himself to the earth as a child; and least, he that exalts himself the most. Learn not to contend for such vile things as are temporal goods, and to abandon disputes, even those on matters of virtue, and to give way to the good pleasure and will of others, as St. John submitted to that of Christ.

Third Point.—Approach, my soul, the borders of the Jordan, and contemplate leisurely and with devotion what passes there. See how Christ removes His garment in the presence of that multitude of sinners and reputed one of them, how He enters the waters of the Jordan, how He bows His head, and how St. John takes the water and baptises Him. And, in the midst of this abasement, raise thine eyes to heaven, and thou wilt see it open to honour the Saviour; the whole heavenly court descends to admire and venerate such profound humiliation, the Eternal Father acknowledges Him for His Son, and the Holy Ghost visibly descends upon His head in the sight of all the people. Rejoice at His glory and honour, and see how God treats those that humble themselves for His love, enter thou into the Jordan with

Christ, and entreat Him to wash away and purify the stains of thy soul.

Fourth Point. — Consider how Christ, through this baptism which He received from the hands of St. John, gave us a baptism incomparably more excellent, which takes away the sins of the soul, purifies it, enriches it, and imprints on it the indelible character and mark of Christian and soldier of His holy army. Recognise the liberality of the Saviour,—rejoice that He is so good, so holy, and so generous. Learn to be grateful, and excite thyself to serve so bountiful a Lord, who bestows a hundred favours for every little service that He receives.

FOURTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE VIRTUES MANIFESTED BY CHRIST AT
HIS BAPTISM.

First Point.—Consider how Christ, being so much greater than St. John, came to receive baptism from Him,—the Creator from the creature,—He who is purity itself from His inferior, in order to condemn worldly points of honour and the vanity of men, who so strenuously resist submitting the one to the other and giving way in precedence and rank. Ponder how far the Saviour was from losing thereby not only before God but also before men, since His Eternal Father publicly honoured Him and the Holy Spirit descended on His head in the sight of all, and St. John proclaimed Him as the Saviour of the world, whom he was unworthy to serve; and resolve by His example to despise human points of honour, giving the first place and precedence over thee to all, persuaded that if thou dost imitate Christ in this, God will honour thee also as He honoured Him; and if thou

dost not imitate Him, thou wilt lose honour from God and man. Ponder that, whereas Christ humbled Himself before His inferiors, thou endeavourest to exalt thyself above those that are superior to thee.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ chose to receive baptism from the hand of St. John in order to authorise his preaching and sanctity, and to dissipate by His example the envy and emulation that sometimes exist between masters and preachers, depreciating each others' actions. Rejoice to possess so holy a Master as Christ, and one Who does such honour to His servants; give Him many thanks for the instruction He affords thee in His holy life, accept His teaching, and henceforth admit no jealousy or competition with any one, but rather do honour to all by word and deed, authorising their actions as Christ did those of St. John the Baptist.

Third Point.—Ponder what Christ said to St. John when he refused to baptise Him, judging himself unworthy of so exalted an office. "So it becometh us to fulfil all justice" (Matt. iii.)—that is, let us practise all virtues without omitting a single one; consider these words as spoken to thee, and content not thyself with one or two virtues, but observe that it becomes thee to practise them all, since thou hast greater need of them than these two luminaries of the world—Christ and St. John the Baptist. Cast a glance on thy soul and see what virtues are wanting to thee, and thou wilt perceive that they are far more numerous than those thou possessest; and hasten to acquire them, in order that vice may not have the mastery in thee. Solicit them of God, and entreat the glorious St. John to obtain them for thee from His Divine Majesty; beg all the saints to aid thee in deserving and obtaining them, and thyself endeavour to practise them all the days of thy life.

Fourth Point.—St. Luke tells us that when Christ was baptised and had issued from the water, He betook Himself to prayer; "and praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape as of a

dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven : Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased " (Luke iii.) Consider how all these favours were received by Him after baptism, to teach us that purification from sins must precede the favours of God, and that if Christ, Who had no sin, first washed Himself in the waters of baptism, much more shouldst thou, who art a sinner, purify thyself in order to receive graces from God. How canst thou pretend that the Father shall acknowledge thee for His son whilst thou art His enemy, and through sin art a child of wrath and perdition ? (Ephes. ii. 3) ; and how should the Holy Spirit come down upon thee, He being purity itself and thou most foul with the stains of so many sins ? Weep over thy faults, baptise thyself with tears flowing from true contrition, and implore the Lord to cleanse and purify thee, and to render thee deserving of His graces ; see all that thou hast lost by being unworthy to receive them, and how the Lord has given them to another better disposed than thou, and thus by thy carelessness and negligence hast thou forfeited so rich a treasure.

FIFTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Second Sunday after Epiphany.

ON THE MARRIAGE OF CANA IN GALILEE.

The Blessed Virgin Mary went to a marriage at Cana, and Christ with His disciples was also there. The wine failed, and our Lady interceded with her Son, who, although answering her by an apparent rebuke, commanded those who served to fill the jars with water, which He changed into a rich wine.

First Point.—Consider how Christ our Redeemer and His Holy Mother assisted at this wedding, in order, as

St. John Chrysostom tells us, to authorise the Sacrament of marriage and the state of matrimony, which, although less perfect than that of religious and of celibacy, is yet holy and good and approved by God, and so thou shouldst not despise those that profess it, and if thou be a religious, consider that there are, doubtless, many married persons who are more pleasing to God in their state than thou art in thine : be ashamed before Him at seeing that others who are less perfect and are exposed to greater perils, serve Him better than thou dost in the state of life in which God has placed thee.

Second Point.—Consider what the Evangelist St. John says, that the most Holy Virgin went to this marriage, and that Christ our Redeemer followed her there afterwards with His disciples, because He followed her as surely as the sun follows the dawn ; and if the rays of devotion to her illuminates thy heart, be assured that the Lord will come to thee and with Him His disciples ; that is the saints of His court, and they will celebrate with thee heavenly betrothal and nuptials : entreat the Queen of angels to admit thee amongst her slaves, and beg of God to imprint her devotion on thy heart, and thou wilt thereby acquire immense favours from His hand.

Third Point.—The wine failed in spite of all precautions in the very midst of the feast, because the wine of content fails in the midst of the most magnificent banquets and rejoicings of the world, and in spite of every precaution and effort of men. Consider how shortlived are the goods of earth, how meagre are all its enjoyments, and how bitter its delights ; compare them with the spiritual ones enjoyed by the soul which is at peace with God, and with the celestial joys that the saints possess in heaven, and learn to despise the former and to prize the latter ; solicit them of the Lord with thy whole heart, and let thy every care be to desire them and by His grace attain to them.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ changed the water into wine at the instance of His most Holy Mother,

because at her solicitation He converts sinners into saints and tepidity into fervour. Turn thine eyes on thyself and recognise thy lukewarmness and the deformity of thy heart; implore the Lord to thaw with the rays of His light the ice of thy heart, and to convert thy sinfulness into sanctity, thy tepidity into fervour; yield to no rebuff, even though He shut the door in thy face; insist, beseech, weep, lament, and persevere in asking. Make the Blessed Virgin and all the saints of heaven thine intercessors; they will all assist thee, and thou shalt obtain this grace of the Lord.

SIXTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE FIRST MIRACLE WROUGHT BY CHRIST AT THE
MARRIAGE FEAST.

First Point.—Consider the compassion of the most Holy Virgin Mary who, when the wine failed, without being asked, besought her Son to remedy the want; and learn two things: 1st, That after her example thou withhold not thy compassion from thy neighbours, but on becoming aware of their need endeavour at once to relieve them without waiting to be besought or solicited by the sufferers: 2d, Acquire a great confidence in the pity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, that she will grant thee whatsoever thou dost ask of her; for if she interceded for them that did not solicit her aid, how much more will she do so for those that call on her? For as St. Bonaventure says, her bounty is such that she is well pleased at being petitioned, and is offended at not being implored. O most Holy Virgin! How different art thou from the great ones of the age, who deem themselves injured by being solicited; at thy feet I prostrate myself, and beseech thee that thou speak one word for this poor

miserable sinner. Beg of the Lord to change my soul from water into wine, and to convert its tepidity into fervour. When thou didst observe the failure of the wine thou didst pray for more ; behold, Lady, how many wants I have, and entreat God to supply them, &c.

Second Point.—Consider the resolute and apparently severe and repelling answer that Christ gave to His most Holy Mother, who, however, persevered in her intent until she obtained what she asked ; and learn to endure drynesses and rebuffs from the hand of God, if He send them to thee in prayer or otherwise, and to persevere in thy purpose, for the Lord wills to try thy constancy and the confidence thou hast in His bounty ; and if thou knowest how to suffer and persevere in prayer, thou shalt see thy joy made perfect. Beg and entreat of our Lord to give thee courage and conformity with His Holy Will, for by perseverance and prayer thou shalt obtain thy request.

Third Point.—Enter by consideration into that room where the marriage is being celebrated, and see Christ seated at table with the Blessed Virgin and the disciples in their order, and all the other guests ; contemplate the modesty, the sobriety, the order, peace, and concord that reign there ; hearken to the words they speak, which are all devout and on heavenly things—no disputes, contentions, or murmurs ; and learn how to conduct thyself at table and in society. Observe, that if the wine failed, it was for a mysterious purpose, and in order to teach us that in the presence of Christ sensual enjoyments, signified by the wine that intoxicates, vanish and disappear. Follow Christ whithersoever He goes, withdraw not from His side, carry Him always with thee in thy heart, and thou wilt experience in His presence great peace, and thou wilt triumph over the incessant warfare that Satan excites by means of our appetites. Turn to Him and ask Him not to leave thee, but to carry thee always with Him.

Fourth Point.—Consider the words that our Lady

spoke to the servants, "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye;" and by this means Christ our Lord wrought the miracle and converted the water into wine; consider them as spoken to thyself from her blessed mouth. See the Queen of angels before thee, and with her eyes fixed upon thee, she says to thee, "Whatsoever my Son commands thee, do thou;" meditate at leisure how important it is to thee to obey this Lady. If the servants at that feast had not followed her advice, Christ would not have changed the water into wine; and if thou dost not follow it, thou wilt not obtain what thou desirest. Cast a glance over the whole of thy past life and see how many things God has commanded thee which thou hast not done, how many of His counsels thou hast despised, how often thou hast been deaf to His voice; weep over the past and amend for the future. Many are the mercies of God that thou hast lost by not doing what He commanded. Submit, now, in everything to His will, and say, Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth; tell me what Thou wouldst have me to do. I here offer myself to do in all things what Thou commandest, willest, and ordainest, whatsoever may be Thy holy will.

SEVENTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE ESPOUSALS OF CHRIST WITH HIS CHURCH.

First Point.—Consider how the Son of the Eternal Father came down from heaven to espouse His Church, for which reason He left His Father and Mother, the Synagogue, and underwent so many labours in this world, until He gave His life on the cross for her love. Ponder this infinite charity and the intensity of the love He bore her, and how much more she cost Him than Eve

did Adam, since He gave not only one rib for her formation, but His whole Body and all His Blood, at the cost of so much suffering, and acknowledge thy indebtedness to this Lord since He underwent this for thee, and in order to rescue thee from the captivity of sin, and procure for thee the liberty of the sons of God. Give Him many thanks for this incomparable benefit, and endeavour to make thyself worthy of His celestial and holy nuptials.

Second Point.—Consider that, as the prophet Osee (chap. ii.) says, the Son of God weds our souls to Himself by means of faith, because they only see Him in this life through faith as through a lattice, and in a limited manner; but in heaven these espousals will be completed by the possession of God, and His clear vision beholding Him and enjoying Him as He is. Contemplate those heavenly nuptials and the ineffable joys that God there offers His chosen ones, without fear that that most sweet and delicious wine will ever fail. That is the refectory into which He introduces His chosen ones, and inebriates them with the sweetness of His repast, causing them to forget bygone labours, and all that might occasion sadness or distaste in their souls! O my soul, excite thyself to serve so good a God who thus remunerates His chosen ones, and inflame thyself with the love of such a spouse, so rich, so noble, so benign, and liberal, who so loves and desires to possess thee; and do thou hasten with all diligence to serve Him.

Third Point.—Consider how the water converted into wine by Christ was incomparably superior to that which had been prepared for the wedding-feast, however great the care with which it was selected; because, as holy David (Ps. lxxxiii.) gives us to understand, one single drop of Divine consolation is worth more than all that the world can give. Oh, how mean and mingled with gall of vinegar are all the consolations it affords us, most bitter gall of dragons, and poison of deadly asps! But that of God is sweet, gentle, and salutary, which gives strength

and comfort to the heart. Beseech Him to grant thee one drop of this wine, as He did to St. Peter on Mount Thabor, in order that, having tasted of its sweetness, thou mayst know how to despise as he did all earthly consolations, and to relish only those that are celestial and divine.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ in these nuptials did not grant the miraculous wine until that which was prepared had failed, because He does not grant His consolations until those of this world are exhausted. Ponder here the difference there is between the two, and how so many persons forfeit heavenly consolations for the sake of earthly ones. O my soul, leave the good things of the world if thou wouldst enjoy those of Christ; turn away from sensual delights and the indulgence of the appetite if thou wouldst enjoy heavenly and divine food; for until the flour from Egypt is spent, God will not give thee the sweet manna from heaven. O Lord, give me Thy grace, in order that I may mortify my passions and despise the delights of the world; render all its joys bitter to me, that I may taste one drop of the delicious wine of Thy consolations.

EIGHTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE FAITH WE SHOULD HAVE IN CHRIST AFTER THE
EXAMPLE OF HIS DISCIPLES.

First Point.—Consider what St. John the Evangelist tells us, viz., that seeing the miracle by which the Saviour changed water into wine, His disciples believed in Him, not that they did not believe before, but that this marvel confirmed them more in their faith; and the esteem they had for His Person was increased in their hearts. Ponder how many greater wonders than this He has done and does each day before thine eyes,

and what must be the tepidity of thy heart in His faith and love, since thou dost not increase therein, but rather with great faint-heartedness and coldness thou dost ever decrease in thy esteem for Him, as thy deeds committed against Him testify. Open thine eyes and observe this truth, and how dead within thee are thy faith, thy understanding, and thy will; and purpose firmly to quicken them by the contemplation of His mysteries and by works of true charity.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ commanded the servants to fill the water-pots with water, a thing so opposite to what was sought; because God wills, as the Apostle St. Paul teaches, that we should subject all our understanding to faith, without curiously investigating or disputing what it tells us, and teaches us, being aware that our narrow capacity cannot attain to the height of its mysteries. O my soul! yield all things, and in all things, to the voice and teaching of God. Consider that He who instructs thee is immensely wise and infinitely good, that He cannot deceive, nor be deceived, and seek not to know more; accept the milk of faith as the child does the breast of its mother, with eyes closed to all human discourse, for faith loses its merit where knowledge is made clear.

Third Point.—Consider what St. James says (Jas. ii.), that faith without works is dead, because alone and without works it confers not salvation. See whether thine be living or dead. If thou dost works worthy of a Christian and of a disciple of Christ, it will be living, and thou wilt deserve to reign with Him in heaven; but if thou be a Christian in name and a heathen in thy works, it is dead, and thy knowledge will render thy account the heavier, because thou hast not acted in accordance with it. Draw, hence, most firm resolution to make thy works correspond to thy faith, and to the title thou bearest, and to regulate thy life in a manner befitting a disciple of the Redeemer.

Fourth Point.—Consider, on the one hand, the very

great necessity of faith, without which, as the Apostle says (Heb. xi.), it is impossible to please God, because it is the root and foundation of all virtue, and, on the other hand, the immense number of souls that God our Lord has left in the darkness of infidelity, and the great mercy He has done thee in bringing thee to His faith and knowledge; and give Him infinite thanks for this incomparable benefit, and at the same time entreat Him to give thee grace to correspond thereunto as thou shouldst, and to shed His light on those who live in the night of infidelity, to send them labourers from His Church to enlighten them, to dissipate the darkness that envelopes them, and to bring them to His faith and knowledge.

NINETEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE MIRACULOUS CHANGE OF THE BREAD AND WINE
INTO THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST.

First Point.—Consider that, as many saints affirm, the Saviour in this miracle by changing water into wine, gave, as it were, beforehand a sketch of that which He was to work later on when changing the bread and wine into His precious Body and Blood. Contemplate this mystery, and that this was the first miracle He wrought, because it was to prefigure the greatest of all His miracles. Ponder the marvellous power He has left to men in His Church to perform it daily, and how He descends at their voice, and how the bread ceases to be bread, and the wine ceases to be wine, and how both are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ, as cold water was converted into that rich wine by the power of Christ our Lord; and give Him many thanks for this miracle; entreat the angels and all creatures to join thee therein,

and weary not of admiring so high a mystery, and venerate and adore it with the eyes of faith.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ, as soon as He had wrought this conversion of the water into wine, commanded that they should taste it, and it produced in all equal appreciation, savour and admiration; and He commands the like when He works this mystery in the most adorable Sacrament—"Eat, O friends, and drink, and be inebriated, my dearly beloved" (Cant. v.) O my soul, to thee does He utter these words, for with thee does the Lord speak whenever He works this miracle on the altar. Approach and taste it, eat and receive it, enjoy it, and savour its sweetness; accuse thy lukewarmness, before the throne of God, that thou dost not savour it, nor admire it, because thou dost not contemplate or receive it as thou shouldst, and beseech the Lord to dispose thee by His grace to savour, admire, and venerate it as thou art bound to do.

Third Point.—Consider how, when Christ performed this miracle once, it caused wonder in all who knew of it, and by it they recognised His Divinity, and yet working this miracle daily in the Divine Sacrament, it so often fails to cause admiration, because we do not contemplate it as it should be contemplated. Cast thine eyes on the angels and saints of the celestial court, and see how they adore it, and with what awe they reverence it; and learn hence to venerate and adore, to serve and respect it with thy whole heart, in fear and trembling.

Fourth Point.—Consider with what ease thou sittest down to the table of this world, how thou dost hunger after the meals thereof, with what delight dost thou partake of them, and drinking the wine of this world, and with what difficulty thou dost approach the table of Christ our Lord, and from what weariness of this heavenly manna of His most holy Body of Blood, which He so liberally offers thee at His altar, dost thou not suffer. Weep over thy misery, and endeavour very

earnestly to amend, in order that God may not send on thee a chastisement like that which He inflicted on those who wearied of the manna from heaven, and exchanged it for the flesh-pots of Egypt. O Lord, let not such a loathing fall on me ; give me grace to esteem as I ought Thy Sacred Table, to prepare myself to receive Thy food with the best possible dispositions, and to despise all the vile and deceitful food of this world, in order to enjoy this Divine, supersubstantial, and true bread of life.

TWENTIETH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON CHRIST THE IMMACULATE LAMB WHO TAKES AWAY THE
SINS OF THE WORLD. ,

First Point.—Recall to mind, and weigh past meditations. Consider first those words spoken by St. John of Christ—"Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sin of the world" (John i.) See how first he gives Him the title of Immaculate Lamb of God, and afterwards that of Saviour, who removes the sins of the world ; because he who is to forgive sins as His minister, should be as a Lamb in purity ; and if such be thy office, place thy hand in thy breast, as did Moses, and see whether thou dost bring it out covered with a leprosy, and whether thou hast the purity of conscience which so high an office calls for, and endeavour with all diligence to obtain it ; and if thou be not a minister of the Lord, pray Him to grant this purity to all those that are such in the world, and to send apostolical men of most holy life, who, being His worthy ministers, shall by their teaching purify the world from vice.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ takes away the sins of the world. First, at the cost of His Blood, and

of so many fatigues, persecutions, and labours as He suffered in the course of His life, until He spent it on the cross for men. Observe attentively all thou owest Him, the love He bore thee, all He did for thee, and how thou shouldst repay Him for such immense benefits. Give Him many thanks for them, and offer Him thy life in return, thy soul, thy being, thy blood, and all that thou art and canst ever be for His holy service.

Third Point.—Consider another means by which this Immaculate Lamb takes away the sins of the world—namely, by His Sacraments, which are the fountains of His grace. Ponder how easy, gentle, and efficacious are those of holy baptism and penance, and the rest which He instituted for the medicine of our souls, by which He forgives our sins at once and without delay. Give Him a thousand thanks for this benefit, remembering how the angels sinned, and to them He granted not this remedy, by which He gave thee the advantage over them, and say, O Lord! what would have been my lot if Thou hadst not given me these remedies? Should I not have been burning in hell for all eternity? A thousand thanks I render Thee for this mercy; and I beseech Thee to grant me Thy grace to know how to profit by such efficacious remedies.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the miracle by which the Lord changed water into wine was a foreshadowing of these sacraments; and ponder how Christ commanded those who served to pour water into the water-pots, and they did so, and on their performing this action the miracle of Christ took effect. If thou desirest that His holy Sacraments should take effect in thy soul, it is necessary that thou shouldst prepare thyself with all diligence, and do on thy part what is required of thee, disposing thyself to receive His grace by means of sorrow for sins, and making satisfaction for them, withdrawing thyself from occasions of sin, and seeking the Divine mercy. Beg this earnestly of the Lord, as also help and grace to follow these counsels, and He will grant them to thee if

thou dost persevere at His door with a devout heart and humble perseverance.

TWENTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE VIRTUES MANIFESTED BY OUR LADY AT THE
MARRIAGE-FEAST.

First Point.—Consider how the most Blessed Virgin, being purity itself, did not disdain to go to this marriage in order to do honour to it, to obtain grace for the children who should be born therefrom, and to do other works of mercy. Extol the virtue of the heavenly Queen, and learn not to join in earthly feasts in order to share in their delights, but rather to raise thine intention heavenward, and seek in all things the greater glory of God and the spiritual good of thy neighbour.

Second Point.—Consider what the Evangelist says, that first the Queen of angels went to this feast and then that Christ was invited; and although he says not by whom, it is sufficient that His Holy Mother was there for us to understand that it was she who sent for Him. Ponder the love He bore her, and the obedience and respect He showed towards her, and entreat of her to call Him and bring Him unto thy soul for its sanctification, for if without being besought she asked for what was needed at these nuptials, being prayed and solicited, she will beg for thee, and obtain the grace of the Lord.

Third Point.—Consider how the Blessed Virgin asked her Most Holy Son to remedy the want which occurred, without doing more than represent to Him the need, saying, "They have no wine," in which she manifested her great power with her Son, since she needed not to multiply her entreaties in order to obtain what she asked.

Ponder of what great value, and how powerful are her words, and beg her to speak one for thee, for therewith thou wilt have abundant means of obtaining what thou dost desire ; and learn at the same time to entreat of the Lord rather by affection than by words, because, as Christ teaches, the virtue of prayer lies not in multiplicity of words, but in the fervour of the affections, in humility of heart, and in true faith and firm confidence.

Fourth Point.—Consider the faith and confidence manifested by the Blessed Virgin on this occasion, since after receiving from Christ an answer to human appearance, somewhat dry and, in truth, mysterious, she doubted not, nor desisted from her intent, but rather with perfect decision told the servants to observe and execute whatever Christ our Redeemer told them, in which she showed that she knew that He would command them as He did, and that by that means the want would be remedied. Learn to confide in God, even though He treat thee with dryness, and to persevere in His service, even though thou dost not obtain at first what thou dost solicit ; and ponder how the most Holy Virgin supplied for the faults of her neighbours, and do thou learn to cover them and gild them over, and not to expose them to view with dishonour and disedification.

TWENTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Third Sunday after Epiphany.

ON THE GOSPEL OF THE DAY.

The sacred Evangelist says, that “When Jesus was descending from the mountain a leper approached Him, and besought health of Him, and Christ extending His hand touched him, healed him, and sent him to show himself to the priests, and to offer the gift commanded

by Moses, charging him to be silent concerning the miracle which had been wrought on him" (Matt. viii.)

First Point.—Consider three affections which the leprosy caused in the sick man—1st, of humility, acknowledging himself a leper, and prostrating himself at the feet of Christ; 2d, of desire for health; and 3d, of prayer, by which he asked it of the Saviour; and having pondered this deliberately, turn thine eyes on thyself, and consider thine own soul sick for many years past with the leprosy of thy sins, and see the affections thy infirmity should awaken in thee of humility before God and men, of desire to regain health, and to see thyself free from the contagious leprosy of vice, and lastly of prayer, beseeching God, with all the tenderness of thy soul, to grant it to thee. Weep over thy negligence and the miserable condition into which thou hast fallen, and learn of this leper to seek for health with all eagerness and diligence.

Second Point.—Compare the spiritual leprosy of the soul with the material leprosy of the body, and consider the difference that exists between them, and how much more grievous is the spiritual than the corporal disease, and how much more dangerous; for the corporal malady menaces the destruction of the corruptible body, which in a short time must be laid in the grave; but the spiritual disease threatens the loss of the soul, which is immortal, and has to appear before God and His angels; behold thine in His presence, covered with the repulsive leprosy of sin, and how God and the angels cover their faces in order not to see it; and command thee to be thrust out from their sight; weep over thy misfortune and seek to remedy it. Consider what efforts thou wouldst make to be healed of the leprosy of the body, and how thou wouldst leave no medicine or remedy untried; and seek the health of thy soul with even greater diligence, for it is of greater importance to thee; accompany this leper, and with him seek Christ, for He is the physician of souls, and, casting thyself at His feet, im-

plore health of Him with a sincere desire to obtain it, and be confident that He will grant it to thee as He did to the leper.

Third Point.—Consider the words that the leper addressed to Christ, born of a lively faith and great confidence in the goodness of the Saviour—"Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." By Thy only Will Thou canst, if it so please Thee, give me health ; as Thou didst make the heavens and the earth and all creatures, because Thou didst will to make them, so canst Thou heal me by Thy only Will ; and to the measure of his faith was the response of Christ, saying, "I will ; be thou made clean." Consider how dead in thee are confidence in God, and the lively faith thou shouldst have in His power, compassion, and mercy, and that for want of these the leprosy of thy sins remains upon thee, and thou dost not obtain what thou implorest of the Divine goodness. Review in thy mind all the things thou hast asked for and hast not obtained, and believe that the cause has been thy want of confidence ; quicken thy faith and hope, and beg of the Lord to give them to thee, in order that thou mayst know how to beseech and implore as thou shouldst His Divine Majesty.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ cured him by extending His hand and touching him, and saying that He willed to heal him. His word, as the venerable Bede tells, was sufficient to operate the cure ; but He chose to add action to it, extending His hand and touching the leprosy, in order to teach us to hold out our hands to lepers, to the sick, and the needy, and not to disdain to touch them, and to dress their wounds as thou wouldst that others should dress thine. Consider how many sick there are under thy very eyes, in the place where thou residest, and perchance in the neighbourhood of thy abode, or within thy very doors, and how little pity thou showest towards them, and learn from thy Saviour to have compassion for thy brethren, and to hold out thy hand liberally towards them, if thou wouldst have Him

extend His towards thee, bestowing on thee His inestimable gifts. Place thyself in His sight with the leper ; draw near and show Him thy wounds ; say to Him, Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst heal me, stretch forth Thy hand to this poor leper, a beggar and most needy ; let me not seek this mercy of Thee in vain, but treat this beggar as Thou didst the leper, and may I, like him, go forth from Thy presence healed.

TWENTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE HEALTH THAT CHRIST RESTORED TO THE LEPER.

First Point.—Consider how, as Jesus came down from the mountain (Matt. viii.), a leper approached Him, and He restored him to health, by which is signified, as the venerable Bede tells us, the Incarnation of the Eternal Word, Who, coming down from the mountain of heaven to the vale of tears of this world, healed the whole human race of the leprosy of sin contracted by Adam our first parent. Consider the infinite goodness of God, which shines forth in this act of mercy, since having no need of us, but only of His immense goodness He deigned to humble His greatness and descend into this exile, and not only to touch our flesh as He touched the leper, but to unite Himself with it, and become man in order to give us health and to cleanse us from the leprosy of sin. Rejoice to have so good a God ; marvel at His benignity ; give Him infinite thanks for so incomprehensible a mercy, and learn to humble thy pride, and to have compassion on the poor and necessitous after the example of this Lord.

Second Point.—Consider how the leprosy was the cause of the leper's seeking Christ, of the quickening of his faith, and of his receiving mercy from the hand of the

Lord ; for oftentimes the infirmities of the body are profitable to the soul, because they draw us towards Christ, according to the words of the Prophet—" Fill their faces with shame, and they shall seek Thy Name, O Lord " (Ps. lxxxii.) ; and in another place, " Their infirmities were multiplied : afterwards they made haste " (Ps. xv.), in which thou shouldst learn two things—1st, to value the sicknesses that God may send thee, rendering Him great thanks for them, since they bring upon thee so many graces ; 2d, to profit by them to seek God, enlivening thy faith and soliciting health of Him as the physician of thy soul as well as of thy body.

Third Point.—Consider what Christ commanded the leper after He had cured him—namely, to keep secret the miracle of the health He had bestowed on him ; because, although Christ was in no danger from vainglory, He chose to teach us to hide the good works we do in His service, and not to seek, but rather to fly from the applause of men on their account, and to perform them in the sight of God alone. Learn this lesson of so illustrious a Master, and allow not thyself to be carried away by the appetite for the vain honour of this world. Hide with humility from the eyes of men the good works thou dost in His service in order not to perform them in vain ; turn thine eyes on thy past life, and see how many good works thou hast performed, of which the merit has perchance been lost by not having kept them secret ; ponder how empty and worthless is this breath of human praise, and how solid, stable, and true is the approbation of God ; weep and lament over thy past losses, and endeavour to amend in future, and say to God with all the tenderness of thy heart, Lord, permit me not to seek to please any one else but Thee ; the memory of past vanity grieves me to the bottom of my heart. I acknowledge that I have erred, and now I return to Thee, and I entreat Thee to sustain me with Thy arm, in order that I may seek to please Thee alone, in my thoughts, words, and works now, henceforth, and for ever.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ commanded the leper to show himself to the priest as well for the fulfilment of the law, given in Leviticus (Lev. xiv.), which so ordained, teaching us thus to respect and obey the law of God, as also in order thereby to signify the necessity and power of sacramental confession, in which, by revealing the conscience to the priest, purity of soul is obtained, and the leprosy of sins is cleansed. See how the leprosy of the vices of thy whole life afflicts thy soul ; and since thou knowest thyself to be defiled, and thou knowest not whether thou hast been purified from these stains, present thyself to the priest, reveal to him the wounds of thy sins, beg of him to cleanse thee, confessing to him with true contrition all thy faults, and thou wilt remain clean. Imagine that Christ speaks to thee and addresses to thee the same words He spoke to the leper. Go, show thyself to the priest ; lay open to him thy conscience, and thou shalt obtain the cure of the leprosy of thy soul.

TWENTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE LEPROSY OF SIN ; ITS HIDEOUSNESS AND GRIEVOUSNESS.

First Point.—Consider in this leper, covered with wounds from head to foot, the sinner a prey to mortal sin, which has taken possession of his soul, and which is called mortal because it kills the soul ; and thus the soul that is in sin is dead to God, putrid, hideous, obnoxious to the eye and to the smell, infested with worms of evil desires and evil thoughts, like a body rotting in the grave. Ponder the ravage wrought in the soul by a single mortal sin, and how thou shouldst fly from it lest thou shouldst fall into it for any created thing, and beg

of God to extend His arm, as He did towards the leper, and to hold thee in His hand, in order that thou mayst never fall into sin.

Second Point.—Consider how the law did not allow a leper to enter into the temple, nor into the town, nor to have intercourse with other men, but obliged him to wander an exile, and, as it were, excommunicated in the deserts in order that he might not contaminate others with his leprosy. Thus the sinner is deprived of the friendship of God and of His saints, and is disinherited of his title to glory, which he lost through sin; and God wages war against him as against His enemy; his iniquity is ever before his face, and he is destined for hell, to be eternally tormented in the company of Satan and of his angels. Ponder how enormous is the malice of a single mortal sin, since such are the effects it produces in the soul; learn thence something of its gravity, and resolve to die a thousand deaths rather than to commit it or offend thy God and thy Creator.

Third Point.—Ponder next, in order to move thyself to contrition for thy sins, and to the amendment of thy life, how often thou hast sinned at the different stages of thy life, for thy sins exceed in number the atoms of which the sun is composed; they are more numerous than the sands of the sea-shore; they are of all times and of all places, with such facility hast thou committed them, as though there were no evil therein—as is said in the book of Job, “drinking iniquity like water” (Job xv.), and for no other reason than for thy pleasure and to please thy friends, causing so much displeasure to God. Since, then, a single mortal sin causes such havoc in the soul, as has been already said, what havoc must not so many and such grievous sins, as thou hast committed during the course of thy life, have produced in thine? Turn thine eyes on thy soul, and have compassion on her. Behold, she is thine own and not that of another, and wash with tears the stains of leprosy that defile her. Cast thyself at the Saviour’s feet, and entreat

Him with true contrition to stretch forth His merciful hand over thee and to heal thee.

Fourth Point.—Lastly, to conclude this meditation, consider who has offended, Whom, who thou art, and who God is whom thou hast offended ; for if thou considerest thyself thou wilt find that thou art a most vile creature, full of miseries, without strength, or power, or merit, and, in comparison with the immensity of God, less than a grain of sand in regard to the whole universe ; and if thou considerest God, whom thou hast offended, He will escape thy view, unable to comprehend Him, because His greatness, His majesty, His power, His wisdom, His goodness—all are Himself, and all infinite, immense, and incomprehensible. If, then, as St. Thomas¹ affirms, the offence is magnified in proportion to the elevation of the person offended, and between thee and God there is an infinite distance, it follows that the malice of thy sins is no less than infinite. Contemplate this truth, and break forth in admiration that all created things should have suffered thee to live, that the heavens have not sent forth lightning to scorch thee, that the earth has not opened itself to swallow thee up alive, and that hell has not consumed thee. Humble thyself to the very dust of the earth, and rend thy heart with grief for having offended God ; entreat Him with tears to pardon thy offences, and to grant thee grace never more to return to sin.

TWENTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE FIRST SIN, WHICH WAS THAT OF THE ANGEL.

First Point.—In order the better to move thee to abhor the leprosy of sin, and to seek with diligence its

¹ S. Thom. I. 2. q. 73. art. 9.

remedy, consider its gravity and malice in that of the first sin committed in the world, which was that of the angels, and contemplate, in the first place, how God having created them in grace, and enriched them with all the natural and supernatural gifts which they could desire, they misused them, became vainglorious, and revolted against their Creator, converting the gifts and graces He had given them for His service into weapons against Him. Ponder how in no place is there security against falling, since the angels fell in heaven, and draw from this truth great cautiousness and humility in all thine actions, and in all places, never considering thyself as secure anywhere, remembering how the angels fell in heaven.

Second Point.—Consider what was the sin of the angels, and thou wilt find that it was no more than an evil thought of self-complacency at seeing themselves so favoured, and the refusal to submit themselves to God. Ponder next how many greater sins thou hast committed, and how often thou hast offended in thought, word, and works; and if God spared not the angels in whom He saw evil, what will He do with thee a vile worm, for the many sins thou hast committed against His Majesty?

Third Point.—Consider the ruin caused in the angels by this evil thought, because in one instant it deprived them of all the gifts and graces they possessed, and of the friendship of God; and from angels they were converted into demons; from the most noble creatures in the world they became the vilest; from the most beautiful, the most hideous; and from heaven they were hurled down into hell, in order that the contagion of their leprosy should not infect the rest. O my soul! contemplate the depravity of a single sin which works such havoc in the most noble and favoured of God's creatures; and since such were its effects with regard to the angels, what will it not produce in thee, a vile worm of the earth? Be thou moved to sorrow and contrition for those thou hast committed against God.

Fourth Point.—Set a seal to this meditation by considering the punishment that God executed on those noble creatures for this one single sin of thought into which they fell; for at once, and without delay, He displayed His wrath upon them, and cast them down from heaven into the depths of hell, to suffer eternally, without giving them hope of recovering what they had lost; and their sin was so abominable in His sight that from the beginning of the world to this day He has abhorred and chastised it, and He will continue to abominate and to punish it eternally, without ever allowing Himself to be moved to compassion or mercy towards them; albeit, His mercy is immense, and He manifests it to all the miserable, and to sinners who suffer in this world. O immense malice of sin! since God so chastises it without term or measure. O Lord, hold me in Thy hand, that I may die a thousand deaths rather than offend Thee by the smallest sin. Ponder the mercy God has shown towards thee, in giving thee time and a remedy for the leprosy of thy sins, which He granted not to the angels; give Him many thanks for it, and purpose most resolutely to heal with all diligence the leprosy of thy sins.

TWENTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE SIN OF THE FIRST MAN, AND ITS GRAVITY.

First Point.—Consider how God created man in the garden of Eden, adorned with His grace and with all the gifts of the natural and supernatural order which befitted him, and how He made him king and lord of all He had created on the earth, and gave him possession of Paradise; and for his companion He formed Eve out of one of his ribs, and having prepared for them so splendid a table for

their delight, of all the fruits of Paradise, He excepted only one tree to prove their obedience. Contemplate the liberality of God which shines forth in this conduct, and the prudence and wisdom He manifests ; and learn that which He shows towards thee, how much thou dost owe Him, and how thou shouldst behave towards Him, who has used such mercy in thy regard, conferring on thee both spiritual and temporal benefits.

Second Point.—Consider how Adam, entreated by Eve his wife, broke the commandment of God, and eat of the forbidden fruit. Ponder how his residence in Paradise did not secure him against falling (neither were the angels secure in heaven), and observe the contagiousness of evil company, since in heaven one angel touched with the leprosy of pride contaminated one third of the angelic spirits ; and Eve tempted by ambition and gluttony communicated the contagion to her husband, and drew him into sin. Take warning by the example of others, and learn from this meditation to fly the society of the wicked and to seek that of the good, and not to trust thyself to women, however good they may appear to be.

Third Point.—Consider the injury done to the first man by this sin, and the punishment that God inflicted on Him, and that which to this day He inflicts, for man was at once deprived of His grace and of the gifts which accompanied original justice ; and his dominion over all creatures and over his own passions was taken from him ; and license was given them to rebel against him as he had revolted against God ; he was condemned to death, and to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow ; and he was exiled from Paradise to the earth, which on account of his sin was cursed and covered with thorns and brambles. Ponder the calamities which befell Adam and his descendants because of this sin, the wars, famines, pests, the inundations, and diseases, but above all the innumerable men who have gone down into hell and are now burning there eternally, deprived of the presence of God and of heaven ; and that being so merciful, yet God never

has pity on them, punishing thus with so many and such bitter torments that one mouthful which was eaten contrary to His will. O costly morsel ! O bitter disobedience ! O sin committed against God ! see and ponder how great is its malice, since God so hates it and punishes it with such great and continued evils ; abase thyself in His presence, and tremble to offend Him by the smallest act contrary to His will.

Fourth Point.—Consider how many and what grave sins thou hast committed against God, and what punishments thou hast merited by them, and that if God overlooked not that of Adam, who was His friend and created in His grace, neither will He overlook thine. Cry out to heaven, and beseech of God not to permit thee to fall into sin and to lose His grace, and rather to destroy thee than to so abandon thee as that thou shouldst offend Him ; tremble at His judgments and at the rigour of His justice, and beg of Him to forgive thee thy past offences, offering to suffer a thousand deaths and the very pains of hell rather than ever to offend Him.

TWENTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE GRAVITY OF SIN AS SEEN BY WHAT CHRIST
SUFFERED ON ACCOUNT OF IT.

First Point.—Consider Christ our Lord as Isaias saw Him, covered with leprosy from head to foot, with no whole spot in all His body. Contemplate Him crucified on a tree, wounded and streaming with blood for thee ; be thou moved to compassion by the intensity of His suffering, and desire to endure the like for His love. Thou didst commit the sin, and Christ bears the leprosy

of His whole body on account of it ; and ponder that His is not like our leprosy which carries the contagion of disease, but rather entirely the reverse, because it gives health to the body and the soul, and is as a balsam and heavenly medicine that cures and preserves from all diseases. Beg of God to heal thee of thine, and to preserve thee with this balsam from the contagion of vice and the leprosy of sin.

Second Point.—Consider what it was that so wounded Christ and caused Him so many and such grievous sufferings—not His sins, for none could be found in Him, but ours with which He burthened Himself ; recognise, then, their magnitude by that of the pains the Son of God Himself underwent on their account ; and if such was the chastisement inflicted by the Eternal Father on His own Son for the sins of others, what will be the punishment that He will execute on sinners for their own sins, and on thee for those thou hast committed ? Tremble before God, and dread the rigour of His justice ; beg of Him to grant thee pardon and grace to do condign penance for thy faults, and entreat Him to heal thee with the balsam of His blood of the leprosy thou hast contracted by them.

Third Point.—Gaze on the crucifix, and consider how Christ satisfies the Eternal Father for the sin of Adam and the sins of all the world, and for thine in particular. Ponder how the extent of the debt contracted by sin is such that, although the whole world were to unite, no amount of works however heroic that could be performed would adequately satisfy for it, if Christ with His infinite merits had not so satisfied. Great, then, is the offence and boundless its malice ; wherefore was it needful that the Son of God Himself should die and make satisfaction ; and if in Him the shadow of sin wrought such havoc, what will not the reality of so many sins as thou hast committed work in thee ? Beg of God pardon for them with thy whole heart.

Fourth Point.—Consider what thou dost owe thy

Redeemer who at so great a cost to Himself has redeemed thee from guilt, withdrawn thee from hell, and opened heaven to thee. See what He endures for thee ; give Him many thanks for so incomparable a mercy ; weep bitterly at having on thy part occasioned Him such acute anguish, and ask His pardon, wishing thou hadst not been born in order that thou shouldst not have offended Him, and offering to die rather than to return to sin, for which purpose implore His grace.

TWENTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE CENTURION WHO CAME TO ASK HEALTH FOR
HIS SON.

Christ having cured the leper outside the town, a centurion came to Him as He was entering it, and asked for the health of his son who lay sick. Christ offered to go to his house to cure him, and the centurion replied, "Lord I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof ; but only say the word, and my son shall be healed ;" and Christ filled with admiration said, "I have not found so great faith in Israel" . . . Many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven ; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out . . . and Jesus said to the centurion, "Go, and as thou hast believed, so be it done to thee ; and the son was healed at the same hour."

First Point.—Consider how God sent this sickness to the son of the centurion, who was the person most loved by him, in order by this means to draw him to His service. Revere the hidden counsels of God who, by means

that appear to men impossible, gives them the health of soul and heavenly blessings, and accept whatever infirmities and calamities the Lord may send thee with reverence and gratitude, even though they strike what thou dost most prize, fully persuaded that they are mercies that He confers on thee, and that through them He designs to enrich thee with celestial treasures if thou but prepare thyself for them, and knowest how to come to Him to receive them from His hand as the centurion did.

Second Point.—Consider the faith and humility of the centurion who held himself unworthy to receive Christ into his house, firmly believing that with one word He could give health to his son, and according to his faith he received the desired favour, the Saviour giving at once by a single word the health asked of Him. Place thy hand in thy breast [and see how dead faith is in thee: compare thine with that of the centurion, and blush that a Gentile should have greater faith and confidence in Christ than thou; weep over thy tepidity, and entreat the Lord to give thee light and knowledge of His goodness, and to enliven thy faith within thee in order that thou mayst deserve to obtain that which thou dost solicit from His Divine hand; recall to mind how many things thou hast asked for, and how few thou hast obtained, although God is so liberal and so ready to grant them, and perceive that the reason why they are not conceded to thee is that thou art wanting in the faith and confidence possessed by the centurion, and enliven thy faith in order to obtain them.

Third Point.—Make use thyself of the words of the centurion, and say, Lord, I am not worthy that Thy Divine Majesty should enter my poor dwelling, but say one word, and my soul shall be healed and saved. Consider who God is, and who thou art. Who God is, His infinite bounty, the immensity of His greatness, His omnipotence, &c., whom the heaven of heavens is unworthy to contain, and then lower thine eyes to see what thou art—a hideous dunghill and a vile worm in what re-

gards thy body, and a sink of sin and miseries in what concerns thy soul : how, then, canst thou be worthy to receive into thy house so sublime and immense a Lord ? humble thyself at His feet, and say, Lord, my soul is sick and ails more than the son of the centurion, and I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter my poor house : yet for the sake of Thy infinite bounty, I pray and beseech Thee to say one word and it shall at once be healed ; this I believe, and this I most humbly implore. Regard not who I am, but have regard to whom Thou art ; show this mercy to an unworthy sinner in order that Thy goodness may triumph in one so undeserving as I am.

Fourth Point.—Consider that awful sentence of the Saviour when He said, “I say to you that many shall come from the east and the west and sit down . . . in the kingdom of heaven, but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into the exterior darkness.” Consider attentively whether thou dost merit to be one of the excluded or of the admitted : consider thy works and thy merits, for it is they that must open or shut the door for thee : consider the difference that there is between salvation and condemnation, and that of necessity, one of the two must fall to thy lot. Consider likewise how much greater is the number of the lost than of the saved, and that many of thy own state and profession are damned in hell, and that it is very possible that thou wilt be condemned if thou live like them. Compare thy life with that of many laymen who live better than thou dost, and see how great a misfortune it would be for thee if in thee were fulfilled those words of Christ that they should be admitted to reign in heaven with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and thou be excluded thence and hurled into the darkness of hell ; and having meditated all this, draw a conclusion in thy favour, and let it be to weep thy past sins and to amend thy life for the future, and so regulate it that thou mayst have some sort of security that thou wilt not be condemned. Cast thyself at the feet of Christ, and say to Him with intense contrition for thy sins,

Lord, it grieves me that I have offended Thee, because Thou art what Thou art, and I firmly purpose to amend in future. Give me grace to accomplish this, and to deserve to be admitted into Thy kingdom, with the centurion and the rest of Thine elect, to enjoy Thee without end.

TWENTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

For the Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany.

ON THE GOSPEL.

St. Matthew tells us, in the eighth chapter of his gospel, that Christ entered into a boat, and His disciples followed Him; and whilst He slept a violent tempest arose, and the disciples being afraid awakened Him, but He rebuked them for their want of faith. He then commanded the winds and the sea, and the tempest ceased, and all were in admiration.

First Point.—Consider how the whole of this occurrence was a figure of the mercy shown by God to the human race, for Christ came forth from the bosom of the Father, descended into the tempestuous sea of this world, embarked in the vessel of His body, and travelled across this sea to the port of glory, enduring so many and such grievous storms in order to render the path more easy for us; and, journeying in our company, He chose to pass the first through its dangers and toils, and to calm the rough waves of persecution which intimidate us, in order that we may journey with a prosperous wind until we reach with Him the desired port of glory. Consider Him, on the one hand, in His glory with the Eternal Father in perfect tranquillity, having need of no one; and on the other hand, see Him on the tempestuous sea of this world tossed by continual storms; and absorbed in admiration

at His immense bounty, give Him infinite thanks for the mercy He has done thee, and for all He has suffered for thee. Entreat the angels and archangels, and all creatures, both visible and invisible, to praise Him unceasingly, and to supply what is lacking in thee, and offer thou to His Divine Majesty the praises they all give Him in return for such great benefits.

Second Point.—The sacred Evangelist says, that when Christ took boat His disciples followed Him and embarked with Him, because they who would be His true disciples must not abandon Him in time of peril. Christ has many companions for His table but few for His cross; there are many who would follow Him to Mount Thabor to enjoy His glory, but few who would go after Him to Calvary to suffer with Him. Consider whether thou art one of His chosen and true disciples who follow Him in His trials, or of the false and cowardly ones who turn their backs on Him. Cast a glance over thy past life and see how often thou hast allowed Him to pass on with His cross rather than bear it thyself a while, flying from self-denial and penance, and from the opportunities which He offered thee of humbling thyself. Weep over thy pusillanimity, and offer thyself with courage and resolution to accompany Him in His labours, to take up His cross and enter in company with Him, and for His love, on the sea of tribulation whenever the occasion may present itself.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ slept in the midst of the tempest; not in the spirit which ever watches over the safety of His own, but in the flesh, in order to try their faith. He it was who commanded the winds to agitate the sea and the waves to toss the boat, and left His disciples in that peril, in order to teach them to have confidence in His bounty, that whilst in His company they should not suffer shipwreck. This was what Christ intended with regard to His apostles, and this, likewise, is what He intends with thee, therefore, when He sends thee toils and storms of persecution, and He

permits thee to suffer them as though He were asleep and saw them not, believe most steadfastly that He sleeps not, neither does He ignore them, nor can He do so, but rather He knows and sees how much, in what manner and wherein thou dost suffer ; and He remains silent, letting things go on in order to test thy faith and thy confidence in His goodness. Let not thy heart fail thee, but trust firmly that God being with thee none can harm thee, and that if thou dost suffer something, it will be for thy greater crown, and that, when thou dost least expect it, He will say a word in thy favour by which the tempest will be stilled and changed into calm and tranquillity.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ awoke at the prayer of His disciples and commanded the winds and the sea, and the tempest ceased ; after which a marvellous calm followed, the sea being like a lake ; and they sailed across it in extreme tranquillity—all which the Saviour wrought, although undeserved by His disciples for their want of faith, in order that thou shouldst recognise His immense compassion, which He uses towards men even though their sins merit it not. Cast thyself at His feet and expose to Him thy wounds, thy toils, and the persecutions and afflictions thy heart endures. Call out to Him from thine innermost soul, and beseech Him earnestly to look on thee with eyes of compassion, and to speak a word in thy favour in order that a calm may come and the tempest cease. Excite thyself by this example to endure the storms thou undergoest, knowing that they will shortly pass away and be followed by eternal peace and tranquillity. Consider the reward that awaits thee, and the peace enjoyed by those who have reached the port of glory in the company of the Lord, and thou wilt perceive that all that is suffered in this world is as nothing compared to the glory that awaits us, and thou wilt draw courage to suffer and to hope in the Lord.

*THIRTIETH MEDITATION.**For the Monday.*

ON THE INSTABILITY AND STORMS OF THE WORLD.

First Point.—Consider how this sea on which Christ and His disciples entered is a figure of the sea of the world which is ever tempestuous and never long in one condition, but constantly changing, rising, and falling in continual squalls, and tossed by the winds. Draw thence, for the profit of thy soul, how little reliance can be placed on it, and put all thy trust in God, who is always the same, and who cannot change nor suffer alteration. Repass briefly the many adverse events and numerous changes and alterations thou hast known in the world; observe its instability, and rely not on it, but place all thy confidence in the Lord.

Second Point.—Consider how when Christ embarked, the sea was calm and serene, but after the disciples went on board it rose up so as to seem ready to drown them in its depths; for it is the custom of the world to rise up against the servants of God. Be not surprised if in doing good thou art subject to persecutions, and tempests of trials arise against thee, since Christ and His apostles were assailed by the like; the disciple is not greater than the master, nor the servant more than his lord; and if tempests of persecution arose against the Lord, what wonder that they should arise against thee. God sends them to thee for the profit of thy humility, for thy crown, and in order to purify thy faith; suffer then with patience, and confide in His bounty that they will shortly pass away, and thou wilt gain a treasure of priceless value.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ slept in the midst of the tempest suffered by His disciples, in order to give us to understand that He finds rest and repose in the toils of His chosen ones, as one who rests his cross awhile

on the shoulders of another. This is what the servants of God do when they endure with patience and joy the toils sent them by the Lord—that is, they give Him rest and relief by carrying His cross for Him awhile. Behold Him, O my soul, wearied with its weight, and beseech Him humbly to give it to thee a little while, and to rest and sleep whilst thou dost carry it; and if thou art now in tribulation be comforted by this thought, being persuaded that He confides in thee, giving thee His cross and taking a little sleep. Bear it with joy for His love, since He bore it all His life for thine; and give Him thanks for the favour He grants thee, and suffer silently until He awakes of His own accord and relieves thee of the burthen that thou mayst repose in His arms now and hereafter in glory.

Fourth Point.—Consider the persecutions suffered by the saints, as well by the confessors as by the martyrs, because they all endured tribulations in this life, and in their voyage to heaven were continually assailed by storms from enemies, rivals, afflictions, sickness, toils, and labours, until they reached the port of glory. Observe their constancy and patience, and what confidence they had in God, and how He brought them victoriously through them all, and crowned them with glory in heaven in company with His Son; and excite thyself with this example to suffer and endure valiantly the trials that God sends thee, and to confide in His bounty in all the tempests that assail thee, and thou shalt experience His assistance.

*THIRTY-FIRST MEDITATION.**For the Tuesday.*ON CONFIDENCE AND RECOURSE TO GOD IN TEMPESTS
AND TRIALS.

First Point.—Consider how Abbot Rupert ponders, as follows:—that Christ lay down to sleep, and at the same time permitted a storm to arise to teach His disciples in all the labours and perils that menace them to have recourse to Him, in whom they will find remedy, assistance, consolation, and tranquillity. Learn this lesson, and seek not in creatures for consolation or relief in thy afflictions, for thou wilt not find it, but rather have recourse to God our Lord who is the safe harbour of refuge, and thou wilt find calm, peace, and tranquillity, and such security as not all the creatures of the world can give thee.

Second Point.—Christ feigned to be asleep whilst His apostles were menaced by peril from the storm, in order that urged by their need they should awaken Him, clamouring and lamenting at the door of His clemency, for, as Abbot Rupert says, oftentimes God sleeps in our regard because we awake Him not by clamouring at His door, and lament not in prayer, nor solicit His aid for our souls with the apostles. Enter, my soul, into account with thyself, and see whether God sleeps in regard of thee through thy fault, and why thou dost not awaken Him by thy cries and lamentations; and if thou dost perchance call to Him, it is coldly and thou art soon wearied, and therefore it is that thou dost not experience His assistance. Arouse thyself and awaken Him if He sleeps, and say to Him repeatedly with the apostles, Save me, or I perish. Lord, hold out Thy hand to me, for I am drowning in an ocean of tribulations. Awake and look on me with the eyes of Thy pity, manifest it towards me a sinner, and let me not be swallowed up in

this ocean of temptations, scruples, toils, and tribulations : none ever call to Thee in vain. Close not Thy ears to the voice of a sinner ; hearken to me, look on me, protect and succour me, my Lord and my God, for if thou dost abandon me, I have no means of safety, and I must necessarily go down to destruction.

Third Point.—Consider that Christ slept not because, as other men, He needed sleep, but because He shut His eyes to all earthly things when He embarked on the deep sea of this world, passing through their midst as though they were not, with His eyes fixed on true and eternal things. O my soul, who dost journey to the port of glory, take to thyself this lesson of the celestial Pilot, and if thou wouldst make a prosperous voyage and reach the harbour of beatitude, close thine eyes to earthly things, and open them to eternal and celestial ones. Take account of that which is to endure for ever, and heed not that which ends with time ; abandon what is destructible, and seek the eternal, and thou shalt attain what thou seekest, and reach the desired harbour. Pass not on without laying thy hand on thy breast and scrutinising the secrets of thy heart ; consider leisurely whether it be entangled in earthly affections, and disengage it with all diligence that it may rest on God alone.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the Evangelist says, that Christ arose and commanded the winds, and they immediately obeyed and were still, and a great calm followed : in which ponder with St. Laurence Justinian how all creatures punctually obey the Creator, man only excepted, who resists His will ; he who should be more submissive to it, he it is who is least obedient to God and offends Him oftenest. Blush that it should be so with thee, that having received so many favours from God, thou shouldst be so rebellious to Him, and that senseless creatures should obey Him and serve Him better than thou. Weep over thy ingratitude, and learn of the winds and waves to obey and serve thy Creator.

THIRTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE IMITATION OF CHRIST, AS FIGURED BY THE GRAIN OF WHEAT WHICH FALLING INTO THE GROUND DIES, AND BRINGS FORTH MUCH FRUIT.—(John xii.)

First Point.—Consider first, as St. Austin teaches us, that the grain of wheat of which the Saviour principally speaks on this occasion is Himself, who came down from heaven, and descending here below was sown in the ground, being covered over with the earth by His humanity, died for us, rose again to such great glory, and brought forth such abundant fruit as has been gathered, and is still being gathered throughout the world. Contemplate how thou thyself art one of the ears of corn that have sprung from this heavenly grain, for from His blood hast thou received thy existence by grace, faith, the Sacraments, and every aid to travel to heaven. Behold, how much thou dost owe Him, and how much He has done for thee, and cease not to extol His bounty and to render thanks to Him for having at so great a cost to Himself conferred on thee so many and such great benefits.

Second Point.—Consider what gratitude thou shouldst manifest to this Lord in return for so many and such great mercies ; and that what He asks of thee is that thou shouldst follow and imitate Him, wholly dying to the world in this life in order to be born again glorious in the next, with an abundant harvest of merits, which thou wilt enjoy for all eternity. Meditate leisurely those words of Christ our Lord, “He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life, in this world, keepeth it unto life eternal” (John xii. 25). Consider the shortness of this life and the eternity of the next, how this life

is as a drama or representation of one hour's duration, in which all is unreal and feigned, and scarcely is it commenced when it fades away and terminates, whilst the next life is real, stable, and eternal, and shall know no term or ending. Open thine eyes and behold how great a folly it is to lose that which is eternal and unending, in order to enjoy a breath of temporal life. Weep over thy past blindness, and begin to serve God ; and witnessing what Christ has done for thee, offer thyself to His service, and to follow and love Him, abhorring all that the world worships in order to carry His cross.

Third Point.—Consider the reward the Saviour offers to His soldiers who shall follow Him valiantly, saying, "Where I am, there also shall my minister be ;" because, as St. Austin says, he that is Christ's companion here in suffering shall likewise be His companion hereafter in glory. Fix thine eyes on the reward, and thou wilt no longer feel the weight of the cross. Behold the eternal beatitude that awaits thee in the society of Christ, and of His saints in glory, and thou wilt discover sweetness in mortification and penance, and in all that is most bitter to the taste and adverse to the sensual appetites. Christ goes before thee ; with such a captain be not cowardly in the battle of life. Gaze on the reward and crown He has prepared for thee, and thou wilt judge all to be light, brief, and as naught for the sake of obtaining it.

Fourth Point.—Consider the example of the holy martyrs who now reign crowned in glory with Christ, and especially that which is given thee by the blessed Saint Ignatius. Observe what fervour burned in his breast. Behold the courage and joy with which he travelled from Antioch to Rome to suffer for Christ ; how solicitous he was that the faithful should do nothing to hinder his martyrdom ; how he prized that crown ; what flames of Divine love blazed in his breast, and how valiantly he gave his life for Christ ; and follow his soul up to heaven, and behold him seated on the throne of glory with the palm and crown of conqueror, in company

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of the Redeemer, whom he followed with his cross in this life; and having slowly contemplated all these things, turn thine eyes on thyself and be ashamed of thy tepidity, whom the merest trifle terrifies from taking up thy cross and following Jesus. Kneel down at His feet, and entreat Him for the sake of His love and for that of this glorious saint to pardon thy past ingratitude, and to bestow on thee one spark of this Divine fire in order that thou mayst follow Him with thy cross, dying to this world in order to live eternally.

THIRTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE PURIFICATION OF OUR BLESSED LADY.

First Point.—Behold first with the eyes of contemplation the most Blessed Virgin going up from Bethlehem to Jerusalem, and entering the Temple of Solomon in company with the glorious St. Joseph, her most worthy spouse, carrying her most precious Son in her arms to offer Him to the Eternal Father for the redemption of the world. Contemplate the modesty and exterior recollection with which she comforted herself, which were so great that they inspired all who beheld her with recollection, the gravity of her walk, the moderation of her manners, the humility that shone in her eyes, the silence of her tongue, and the chastity of her countenance; enter next into her innermost heart, and contemplate the Divine love that burned in her breast, her devotion towards God, and her charity towards men, for whom she offers that Immaculate Lamb who takes away the sins of the world; and behold, likewise, the heavens opened, and the members of that court rapt in contemplation at seeing

that most pure Lady enter the Temple, bearing that treasure in her arms which can be compared with no created things. See the angels descending to accompany her, how they celebrate her entrance into the Temple, the joy of the most Holy Virgin and of the glorious St. Joseph, and let them not go without thee; accompany them and serve them, rejoicing with their joy, and entreat them to permit thee to go in their company although thy sins render thee unworthy so to do.

Second Point.—Consider how, notwithstanding her great purity, the Blessed Virgin went up to the Temple to be purified, in order by her example to preach to the world purity of soul and body. Consider the example she offers thee of so many and such heroical virtues as she here exercises; and see whether thou by thy life dost give edification or scandal. Cast a glance over past years, and see how many persons thou hast scandalised by thy bad example, and caused to fall into vice and sin, and maybe that some are now in hell by thy fault, and take heed of the account that God will require from thee of their souls. Beseech the Lord to grant thee grace to amend thy evil ways for the future, and pray the most Blessed Virgin to obtain it for thee, in order that henceforth thou mayst edify all with the example of thy life.

Third Point.—Consider first the humility of the most Holy Virgin which shone forth in this act, for, being purity itself, she went to the Temple to be purified, thus acknowledging herself as stained and despising all human points of honour and the esteem and appreciation of men, in order that thou shouldst learn to despise them, caring only for the judgment and appreciation of God, which alone are true and worthy of esteem. Secondly, her obedience, for being exempt from the law, she submitted herself voluntarily to it, as the venerable Bede tells us, in order to avoid giving to others occasion of scandal and of murmuring; and do thou learn to subject thyself to the Divine Law, which for so many reasons obliges thee, fulfilling its precepts most punctually, and,

as far as in thee lies, avoiding all cause for murmurings on the part of others, even where thy own conscience is not concerned. Consider, thirdly, how she chose in all, and above all, to follow in the footsteps of her most Holy Son, and not to admit any exception or singularity as neither did He. Endeavour to seize this likeness and to copy her virtues in thy soul; see whether thou dost possess those above named and the others which she teaches thee, and beg of her together with the instruction to obtain for thee grace to put it in practice.

Fourth Point. — Consider what St. Bernard says, namely, that the most Blessed Virgin, being purity itself, came to the Temple to be purified, to teach men that however pure they may be, they should purify themselves more and more each day, fulfilling what God says, by St. John in the Apocalypse, “He that is just let him be justified still, and he that is holy let him be sanctified still” (Apoc. xxii.) Take these words as addressed to thee, and follow the example of the Queen of angels; and since thou art so defiled with stains and sins, render her to-day this homage to take to heart the purification of thy soul, to cleanse it from the dross of vice, and from every mote of imperfection that it may possess, and to labour with all thy strength to acquire virtue, and to journey courageously towards perfection, rising from brightness to brightness unto the mountain of sanctity, which thou wilt attain by following in her footsteps and imitating her virtues.

*THIRTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.**For the Friday.***HOW THE BLESSED VIRGIN OFFERED HER MOST HOLY SON
IN THE TEMPLE.**

First Point.—It is now time, O my soul, to approach the Temple of Jerusalem, and to behold and contemplate what there takes place, and the most agreeable sacrifice offered therein to God, no longer that of oxen or cows, or other animals, but of the very Son of the living God, for the redemption of the sins of the world. Enter devoutly and silently through the portals of the Temple, and behold in spirit that most orderly procession which accompanies the most pure Virgin ; see there St. Joseph and holy Simeon, the just man who feared God, both blanchèd by years, and Anna the prophetess with them, a great multitude of people, and a far greater multitude of angels and heavenly courtiers, who have come down to accompany this most exalted Lady and her Blessed Son. Contemplate how she approaches and offers Him to God in the hands of the priest, and the Son loses His mother and the mother her Son, and both offer the same holocaust and sacrifice—the Son offering Himself to His Eternal Father for the human race, and the Holy Virgin offering Him in like manner with so willing and resolute a will that, were it pleasing to God, she is prepared to sacrifice Him with even greater courage than Abraham his son Isaac. Raise thine eyes to heaven and behold the Eternal Father accepting this sacrifice, even more complacently than that of Abraham or of Abel, and if He looked on theirs and was so well pleased, both with the offering and with them that offered it to Him, that He bestowed on them innumerable favours in return, consider how many He would grant to the most Blessed Virgin, and to all the world, on account of this one ; lose

not so favourable an opportunity ; offer it thou also, and beg of the Lord to grant thee the favour of admitting thee into His service, and of giving thee grace to persevere eternally therein.

Second Point.—Consider the charity and most intense love with which the Blessed Virgin offered in sacrifice in the Temple not only her Son, but her own heart and soul, beseeching the Eternal Father to accept that gift and keep it for His own ; approach thou also with humility, and, placing thy heart in her hands, entreat her to offer it to God with her Son in an acceptable sacrifice. Offer her all thy desires, thy thoughts, words, and actions ; all the senses and powers of thy soul, thy life, thy being, and supplicate her humbly to make of all these a holocaust with her most precious Son, in order that His Blood and His merits may supply all thy defects and the courage in which thou art wanting, and that thy sacrifice may be agreeable in the eyes of God, through the merits of that Immaculate Lamb who takes away the sins of the world.

Third Point.—Consider how she offered as a ransom for her Son two turtle-doves or pigeons, the gift of the poor, rejoicing to be esteemed such, she who so few days previously had received such rich gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh from the Eastern kings ; but her generous pity had not allowed her to retain them for herself, and she had distributed all to the poor ; herself remaining poor for our sakes. O most merciful Virgin ! how dost thou shame our vanity, we who always seek to appear rich and powerful and greater than we are, in order to be esteemed of men. Give me a spark of thy spirit in order that I may love poverty and take pride in it, and may despise the vanity of the world and the esteem of men, and grant me grace to imitate thy liberality, giving away all that I possess and may acquire in alms to succour the needs of my neighbours, in order to remain poor for the love of thy most Holy Son.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the Blessed Virgin

offered five shekels, besides the birds, for the ransom of her Son, who was to redeem the world by His five wounds. Meditate on what was signified by this gift, and how she saw therein figured the wounds and the shedding of His Blood, by which her Son was to ransom the world on Mount Calvary, and how different would be His surroundings then ; what insults would then be heaped on Him in place of the blessing now invoked by Simeon and all the people ; and how different His position in the arms of the cross to that He now held in hers, and in those of holy Simeon ; and how her heart must have been rent with grief and her tears have flowed in torrents over the face of Jesus. Contemplate all this thou also, and approach to gather up those pearls, and entreat her to be consoled and not to embitter her memory with so cruel a passion, and fail not to accompany her on her return to her house, and remain with her as her servant.

THIRTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON HOLY SIMEON, WHO RECEIVED CHRIST INTO HIS ARMS.

First Point.—Consider how the Holy Spirit brought St. Simeon on this day to the Temple in order to fulfil his longing desire of beholding the Saviour of the world, and how great must have been the joy of this holy old man when he saw Him in his own arms, and beheld the fulfilment of what had been for so many long years the object of his desires and supplications ; and acquire thence great confidence of seeing thine also accomplished, for the Lord who inspires them sends likewise their fulfilment in due time. Cease not from thy petitions,

but rather persevere with faith and confidence in the Lord, for if He delays their accomplishment, it is in order to test thy constancy and augment thy merit. Cry aloud, pray, lament, and call to Him, saying with holy Job, "Although (the Lord) should kill me, I will trust in Him" (Job xiii. 15), for He is powerful to fulfil my desires even after my death.

Second Point.—Consider how St. Luke says of holy Simeon, "This man was just and devout, and the Holy Ghost was in him," giving us to understand that the Holy Spirit dwells only in those who keep justice, and have the fear of God in them. Place thy hand on thy breast and diligently inquire whether thou hast these virtues, and whether thy soul is a worthy abode of the Holy Spirit, and study to acquire them in order that He may abide in thee and enrich thee with His gifts as He did St. Simeon, through whose merits entreat the Lord that the Holy Ghost may not depart from thee.

Third Point.—Consider, with St. Ambrose, that holy Simeon was just and the Holy Spirit dwelt within him, because he did not desire and implore God for the Messiah to come so much for his own personal interest as for that of all the people. Enter into his innermost breast and contemplate the flames of charity with which it was consumed for the welfare of all Israel; behold his heart pierced through with sorrow for the sins of the world, and on account of the numbers that each day went down into hell, and because the portals of heaven were closed until the Redeemer should open them, and how, with longing for the salvation of the world, he cried out with tears and sobs, beseeching God that the desired of nations should come, and that his eyes should behold Him, and that so many evils should be remedied; and the Lord heard him and comforted him on account of his great charity, and of the anxiety he had for the welfare of his neighbours. Oh that a like holy zeal burned in thy breast, and that thou wert not so rapt up in self-love,

and, instead of seeking always after thy own advantage and convenience, thou wert filled with desires for the good of thy brethren, imploring and clamouring with holy Simeon for their salvation, how pleasing wouldst thou then be to God, and what infinite mercies thou wouldst receive from His hand ! Learn of this holy old man so salutary a lesson, and, considering the perdition of such numbers as are now condemned for their sins, cry out with him, and beg of God to send evangelical labourers full of the Holy Spirit to convert the world, and to remedy so many evils.

Fourth Point.—Meditate attentively the canticle which this holy old man intoned, holding Christ in his arms, and his soul bathed in an ocean of joy and delight : “ Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word, in peace, because mine eyes have seen Thy salvation,” &c. Ponder each word separately, for each is a honeycomb of sweetest savour. “ Now,” for his hour had come when he saw himself united to his God. See how the just die singing, and they who have done penance all their life overflow with joy ; and, on the contrary, sinners who have lived in delights die weeping, and in an instant go down into hell. He says he is “ dismissed,” in order to declare how he was as a captive in the world, as one bound behind bars and fettered as in a prison, ever desiring to go forth to the liberty of the sons of God. Learn how to live, and thou wilt know how to die, and observe whether thou dost desire to leave this world or to live many years, in order to enjoy its pleasures, esteeming as thy country what is in truth an exile, and be grieved at thy lukewarmness, and abandon thine error. He says he departs “ in peace,” because thereby an end is made of the war that he has waged against the world and hell, and by its termination he obtains peace and receives his crown ; but for the wicked it is the end of their pleasures, and the painful war in hell commences which shall have no end. O miserable and unhappy he who here enjoys peace in worldly de-

lights, for at the hour of death he will pass in an instant into the continuous warfare of hell ! Open thine eyes now when it is yet time ; look to thyself and learn of holy Simeon how to live and how to die, and always to seek God ; and, since the Blessed Virgin is so generous, beg of her to give thee, though unworthy, her most holy Son to hold an instant and shelter Him in thy breast. Offer Him the very flesh of thy heart, gather therein the gentle tears that flow from His eyes, to wash therewith the stains of thy sins. Offer Him thy desires, and seek henceforth, like holy Simeon, for naught else than His honour and glory and the good of thy neighbour.

THIRTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany.

ON THE GOOD SEED AND THE COCKLE.

Christ said that the kingdom of heaven was like to a man who sowed good seed in his field, and whilst his servants slept, the enemy came and sowed cockle in the midst of the wheat. His servants wished to gather it up, but he forbade them, lest they might, perhaps, at the same time, tear up the wheat with the cockle, and so it was left till the time of the harvest, when they were to be separated, the wheat for food and the cockle for the furnace (Matt. xiii.)

First Point.—Consider how, according to the explanation given by the Saviour Himself, it is He who sows the good seed, and the enemy who sows the cockle is the devil, for which reason thou shouldst be very wary not to give him entrance into thy heart, for the seed he sows is always evil, and he seeks thy destruction. The cockle, as St. Austin observes, greatly resembles the wheat be-

fore it is grown up ; but its evil properties appear in its fruit ; thus also the teaching of Satan has oftentimes at first the appearance of good, but afterwards its malice is shown in the fruit of its works, for which reason it should never be accepted, even though it seem good and holy ; it is enough that it comes from his mouth for us to know that it is evil, and tends to our perdition. Beg of God light to know it, and to discriminate between what is good and what is evil, and to embrace His holy doctrine, and fly from the evil and pernicious insinuations of the devil.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ says that He sowed good seed in His field, expecting fruit therefrom. Enter into account with thyself and see how much seed of holy inspirations, of good counsel, preaching, and example He has sown in the earth of thy heart, and what fruit He has gathered from it, for instead of wheat thou hast yielded thorns and briers, and by thy malice thou hast converted the good seed into pernicious cockle. See what an account thou wilt have to give the Lord at the time of the harvest, when death comes with his sickle to reap thee for the next world. Behold the peril in which thou livest, and weep over thy past life. Regain with diligence what thou hast till now lost in what remains to thee of life.

Third Point.—The Saviour says, that whilst the men slept the common enemy came and sowed cockle amongst the wheat, in order, as St. Austin says, to give us to understand that our own carelessness is the cause of our perdition, for thereby we give place to the devil to do his will in our souls. Through thy neglect the devil sows in thy heart the cockle of evil thoughts, of rancour and of discord with thy neighbour ; for which reason watch over thyself, and permit not thine enemy to have any power over thee ; neglect not thyself an instant, for he is ever on the watch, and ceases not to wage war against thee ; and as thy salvation is at stake, fight valiantly. Beseech God not to abandon thee, but to be thy strength against him ;

and entreat thy holy angel, who knows thy frailty, to guard thee, for if he leave thee, thou wilt undoubtedly be vanquished.

Fourth Point.—Consider how God esteems the good, signified by the good wheat, since on their account He suffers in the field of His Church, the wicked figured by the cockle, lest in rooting up the latter, injury be done to the wheat. Give thanks to God for the faithful servants He has in His Church, for whose sake He bears with so many evil ones, and in order to preserve whom He destroys not the world as its sins deserve; and turn thine eyes on thyself and see whether thou art of the fold of the just or of sinners, and whether thou givest cause for God to annihilate the world, or whether thou restrainest Him by thy prayers and merits. Remember the humility of St. Dominic, who, on entering a place, used to beseech God with tears not to destroy it because of the great sinner who had just entered there, whilst, in truth, by his merits he restrained the anger of God from ruining the world. Humble thyself in His presence, and entreat His Divine Majesty to give thee grace to live holily, and to be of the fold of His elect and not of that of the reprobate.

THIRTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE PROPHECY OF SIMEON.

The holy old man Simeon, holding the child Jesus in his arms, blessed His parents, and speaking to Mary His mother, he said, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted, and thy own soul a sword

shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed" (Luke ii.)

First Point.—Consider how, for the love of the child that he held in his arms, holy Simeon blessed the parents before all the people, for they deserve the blessing of God who bring up their children holily; and this blessing was likewise a figure of that which God bestows on all through the merits of His most Holy Son; from which thou shouldst draw affections of gratitude to this Lord, who by His Blood merited for thee the eternal blessing of God; and endeavour, as far as in thee lies, to fulfil thy duties in order never to forfeit it, following the example given thee by the Blessed Virgin and the glorious St. Joseph, who were filled with heavenly gifts and graces by the blessing conferred on them by holy Simeon.

Second Point.—Ponder the words and prophecy of St. Simeon, that Christ, who is salvation itself, should be for the resurrection of some and for the ruin of others—that is, as Origen explains, He is to be the resurrection and eternal glory of the just, who profit by His light, His life, His example, and teaching, and the eternal ruin of those who by their malice do not profit by them. Enter into account with thyself and observe first, leisurely, that there is no medium between these two, but thou must necessarily belong to one or to the other; then go a step further and consider how great is the difference between being saved for ever and being lost for ever, between reigning with Christ in heaven and being condemned with the devils in hell; and in view of both these things take heed of thy state of soul now, whilst thou dost meditate this, and consider dispassionately to which of these folds thou dost belong, and whether thou hast profited or not by the merits of Christ. Consider what account thou couldst give to God of them to-day, if He were to require it of thee, and see in what condition thou art, whether thou dost belong to the just or to the wicked; and since time is granted thee, profit by it and by the merits of Christ, and entreat with tears not to be one of

those who are thankless and ungrateful for His mercies, but to be one of the most grateful, and ask for grace to serve Him as thou shouldst.

Third Point.—Consider what holy Simeon prophesied concerning Christ, namely, That He would be a sign to be contradicted, in order that the thoughts of many might be revealed, as well as those who were to confess Him, as of those who were to persecute Him, as St. Gregory and Origen explain; and it is certain that the prophecy was fulfilled in Christ, who was the butt of contradiction from the very day of His birth, when persecuted by Herod until the last day of His life. In such manner did God use His Son in order that thou mayest not wonder if He send thee also similar treatment, but rather recognise therein a proof of His love; and understand that He sends thee contradictions in order to purify that which thou professest towards Him, and to give thee an opportunity of imitating Him, and of meriting a crown for heaven. Prepare thyself, then, for the combat, and say to the Lord with courageous resolution, I here offer myself, O Lord, to accept whatever may be Thy will. Cut, wound, humble Thy servant; let the arrows of persecutions and the wars of enemies be directed against me. If Thou be by my side and dost fight for me, let who will rise up against me. My glory shall be to imitate Thee, and suffer for Thee affronts, revilings, wounds, and tortures.

Fourth Point.—Consider the words addressed to the Blessed Virgin, namely, That a sword of sorrow should transpierce her soul, in which the bitter death that Christ was to suffer at the hands of men was foretold, and as the Blessed Virgin herself revealed to St. Bridget, from that day forward her soul was, as it were, riven by a sword of grief. Thus does God will that His chosen ones shall ever have present to their minds the memory of His Passion, compassionating His sufferings and encouraging themselves therewith to endure whatever crosses are sent them. Enter into the innermost soul of the Blessed

Virgin, and behold it pierced with that penetrating two-edged sword of love and compassion for her most holy Son, for her grief at His Passion was proportionate to her love, and as her love was without limit, so likewise was her sorrow boundless. Grieve thou with her; move thyself to compassion for her great suffering, and lose not memory of the great mercy done thee by Christ in suffering for thee.

THIRTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON ANNA THE PROPHETESS, WHO, TOGETHER WITH HOLY SIMEON, CONFESSED CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE.

Whilst holy Simeon held the child Jesus in his arms there came to the Temple a holy widow called Anna, who had the spirit of prophecy, and had lived eighty-four years in fasting, penance, and prayer without leaving the Temple, and seeing Jesus, she broke forth in His praise, telling all present many wonderful things concerning Him (Luke ii.)

First Point.—Consider how many years these two holy old persons had lived, since they had reached to so great an age in fasting, penance, vigils, and prayer; for these virtues shorten not life but lengthen it, as God prolongs the days of those who use them as they did. Encourage thyself with their example to serve Him, setting aside the fear of losing thy health and shortening thy life, with which the devil inspires those who embrace a life of penance. Confide in the bounty of God that He will preserve thee, and give thee the opportunity of gaining much merit if thou determine to breast the wave and embrace a life of penance and to make head against sensual delights and vice.

Second Point.—Consider the courage of this holy woman, who in the midst of the people and in so frequented a place acknowledged the Lord and published His praises without being intimidated by the enmity borne Him by Herod and by all His other foes. Blush in her presence, recognising thy cowardice, and what petty fears restrain thee from openly declaring thyself for this Divine Lord, from publishing His greatness and making Him known to all. Earnestly entreat Him to pardon thy cowardice, and resolve henceforth valiantly to publish His perfections, and to make Him known to the whole world, as far as thy state and profession permit.

Third Point.—Consider the virtues by which this holy woman merited to know and behold Christ, and to foretell to the world His greatness, which were, as enumerated by St. Luke, chastity, recollection, fastings, prayer, and frequentation of the Temple. Ponder each separately, turning thine eyes on thyself to see whether thou hast these virtues, and endeavour to acquire them. Lay stress on the virtue of perseverance, which is the crown of all works, and implore God with all thy strength in order that thou mayst deserve to enjoy Him in the holy temple of His glory.

Fourth Point.—Consider the remuneration of graces and favours wherewith God repaid this holy woman for her longing desires and the service she had rendered Him by publicly acknowledging Him in the Temple. Contemplate the joy with which her soul was inundated when she beheld the Saviour of the world before her eyes, the rejoicing of her spirit, the energy with which she was filled to serve Him always, and the firm hope of enjoying Him in glory, which animated her; and how she burst forth into the praises of God, whilst tender tears flowed from her eyes, and she could never tire of gazing on Him, extolling and blessing Him; and what conversation she had with the Blessed Virgin Mary, His mother. O blessed soul, who didst know how to hope in the Lord, and whose desires He filled with most abundant grace!

O my soul! contemplate all this, and cease not to admire, to rejoice, and to excite thyself to fervour in the love and service of thy God, by the examples of Anna the prophetess, and of holy Simeon.

THIRTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE EXPLANATION OF THE PARABLE OF THE COCKLE.

The sacred Evangelist tells us that Christ dismissed the crowd which followed Him, and His disciples approached and asked Him to declare to them the meaning of the parable of the cockle, and Christ explained it to them, saying, The good seed are the just, and the cockle the wicked, and the enemy who sowed it is the devil; the time of the harvest is that of the last judgment, the servants are the angels, who will separate the good for heaven from the wicked, who, like the cockle, shall burn in hell.

First Point.—Ponder first, with St. John Chrysostom, that Christ preached to the people in parables in order that they might question Him concerning what they did not understand; and because they did not this, but despised His teaching, He sent them away empty. See how often thou fallest into the same fault, when God sends His word to thee, sometimes speaking to thy heart interiorly, at others exteriorly by books and preachers, and thou remainest fasting and deprived of this salutary food, because thou dost not understand it, nor dost inquire concerning it of those who know more, heeding them not, as neither did this people heed the preaching of Christ. Consider how important it is to thee that He should not send thee away from His school,

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as He did them, and take great pains to gather up the grain of His word in thy heart, and to assimilate it for the good of thy soul.

Second Point.—Consider how St. Jerome ponders, that Christ dismissed the multitude of the people in order that His disciples might approach, and that He might explain Himself to them ; because God manifests not His secrets, except to those who know how to withdraw from the tumult of the crowd into the solitude of recollection and prayer, in which the soul draws near to God, as on this occasion the apostles approached Christ, and He manifested His secrets to them. Learn to withdraw from the hubbub of men, which harasses and distracts the spirit and impedes the hearing of the secrets of God. Beg of Him His grace in order to cast aside all secular business, and to approach Him in the privacy and retirement of prayer, and there say to Him, with His disciples, Lord, declare Thy word unto me, teach me Thy will, grant me light to understand Thy doctrine, as Thou didst explain it to Thy disciples, and give me grace to profit by it, &c.

Third Point.—Consider what Christ says—namely, that the just are the good seed, and the wicked the cockle, and ponder what fruit the good seed yields, of which Christ testifies that in good ground it brings forth a hundredfold ; and the harm done by the cockle, since it often chokes the wheat ; and recognise how important it is for thee to separate thyself from the wicked, and to associate with the good. Consider how many have been lost by the frequentation of evil company, and how many have been saved through association with good persons. See what profit thou derivatest from the latter, and what injury from the former, and beg of the Lord His grace to break with the world, and to become acquainted with good persons, and avail thyself of their counsels.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the enemy sowed cockles in the midst of the wheat, because, as St. John Chrysostom

says, in the midst of the more perfect, and amongst priests and religious, Satan oftentimes sows the cockle of discord, of evil counsels and perverse doctrine, for which reason it is necessary to be ever on the alert, and not to sleep even shouldst thou live in a monastery of the most fervent religious, or amongst the elect and perfect of the Church. Watch always and give not place to the cockle which the common enemy sows in the midst of the wheat. Cry to God with David, "Enlighten my eyes that I may never sleep in death, lest at any time my enemy say, I have prevailed against him" (Ps. xii.) Grant me to watch constantly against my enemy, and never permit the cockle of discord in the midst of Thy good wheat, nor let there be wicked amongst the good. Preserve always thy field fruitful and free from the briers of vice, in order that it may render abundant fruit of a hundredfold in this world, and hereafter in eternal life.

FORTIETH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE REAPING OF THE HARVEST, AND THE LAST JUDGMENT.

First Point.—Consider how Christ says, "That the time of the harvest is the end of the world, and the last judgment, at which we shall all appear." Meditate how infallibly that time will come and the drama of this world will end, and each one will have to give an account of his part in it, and thou likewise of thine. Consider how shortly this day will come, and the earth will be destroyed, and all present things will terminate; how all will there be equal, and no distinction made for popes or kings or princes, or lords, for one will have no more dignity

than another, any more than actors after a play is ended preserve that of the personages they have represented, and each will be followed by his works, and thou by thine likewise. O Lord, how greatly does the light of this truth undeceive me, and what blindness is it not in man to strive so assiduously after the perishable things of this world, and to be so heedless of those of the next, which alone are real and eternal! Grant me grace never to be the slave of this delusion, but ever to seek what is for Thy greater honour.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ says, that then the angels will descend from heaven, and will separate the wheat, that is the elect, for heaven, and will abandon the cockle, that is the wicked, to hell. Consider what will be the joy of the good to behold themselves conducted by the hands of angels to heaven, accompanied by the celestial choirs, who will sing their victory with heavenly melody; and with what rage will the wicked be seized at seeing themselves condemned and thrust away into hell, without being able to help themselves; how they will curse their fate, and weep over their misfortune, and lament in vain; and what would they not then give to have lived holily in this world, and what a life they would embrace did God give them the opportunity of penance. Conceive that now this opportunity is afforded to thee, since thou art aware that by thy sins thou hast merited hell, and avail thyself of the time given thee, to live in such a manner as to be secure in that awful day of account.

Third Point.—Consider how the Saviour says, that the just will be resplendent as the sun in the Kingdom of God, not as St. John Chrysostom tells us, that their light will be limited to that of the sun, but because there is nothing brighter nor more beautiful to which we can compare them. Contemplate their happiness at having gained heaven, and what glory they will enjoy without fear of forfeiture; the place will be one of supreme delight, the society that of the angels and heavenly cour-

tiers, the vision that of God, and therewith the fulfilment of their desires, and see of how far greater worth is one hour of such delight, than all those that the world can give, and at how small a cost it is purchased, by the brief penance and toils of this world endured for God, all which pass away, and the delight thus gained will last for ever.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the Saviour says of the wicked, that they shall be precipitated like cockle into the burning furnace of hell, where there shall be gnashing of teeth and eternal torments. Enter in spirit into that tenebrous cavern, and behold what is there suffered from the inextinguishable fire, the palpable darkness, from hunger, thirst, cries, and from suffering that is endless, and without truce of a single instant, in company with the devils and the rest of the damned: enter into their hearts and scrutinise their thoughts, their longings, their desires, the memory of lost blessings, and the worm that dieth not gnawing at their consciences, and above all note the eternity of these pains, and then turn to thyself and see how infallibly one of these two fates must be thine, either to reign eternally with Christ, or to suffer with the damned in hell; and cry aloud to God with fear and trembling lest thou fall into such misery, and say to Him, Lord, hold me in Thy hand, in order that I be not lost; let me die a thousand deaths and endure all the torments ever invented in this world, rather than offend Thee. It grieves me a thousand times over to have committed sin, and I earnestly promise to do henceforth rigorous penance, and to lead an exemplary life; give me Thy grace to accomplish this promise and never to depart therefrom.

*FORTY-FIRST MEDITATION.**For the Friday.*

ON THE VIRTUE OF HOPE.

First Point.—Consider the excellency of this gift and the greatness of this virtue, by which we hope from God for ourselves as well as for our neighbours eternal salvation, and also all assistance and graces for obtaining it, the pardon of our sins, all virtues and spiritual good, things for our souls, and all temporal goods that are conducive to our welfare and to that of our neighbours—for all these things come from God ; and if hope were to fail us, as is the case with the damned, we should live in supreme misery and affliction without possibility of consolation. Encourage thyself in thy trials by increasing thy hope in the Lord, and entreat Him affectionately to grant thee this most precious gift.

Second Point.—Consider the foundation and grounds on which the virtue of hope reposes, which are the infinite goodness, mercy, and liberality of God, His infallible word, which cannot deceive, His immense charity, and the merits of Christ through which He accords to us the mercies and graces which we cannot deserve by our own ; and as these merits are infinite, they can never fail ; neither will His word fail, if our hope does not. Ponder all this, and excite thy heart to confidence in God, who loves thee infinitely more than thou art capable of loving ; and if children have confidence in the love and benevolence of their parents, much more shouldst thou confide in such a Father as God.

Third Point.—Glance at the hope that inspired the holy martyrs and confessors, who in the midst of the labours and martyrdom they endured for God, trusted in His goodness that He would give them strength to suffer here, and would hereafter crown them in glory. See

how their hope deceived them not, and how great was the constancy the Lord gave them in the midst of toils and persecutions. Consider how some were weak women and tender maidens, and behold what constancy they manifested, how valorously they suffered, and what a crown they obtained, and are now enjoying and will for ever enjoy in heaven. Give thanks, therefore, to God, and beseech Him to strengthen thy hope by their example, in order that thou mayst not faint, whatever labours or contradictions assail thee.

Fourth Point.—Consider what should be the qualities of this virtue, in order that it may not degenerate into presumption—namely, it should be just, confiding in God alone, and not in thyself, or in creatures, through the means that God has ordained, not looking for miracles or extraordinary ways of obtaining what we ask for ; it should be steadfast, not overthrown by the toils or difficulties that may present themselves ; and lastly, it should be persevering, never failing, even though its fulfilment be delayed. Rest thine eyes on holy Simeon, and contemplate the steadfastness with which he hoped from God the greatest favour He has granted to the world, which was to give it His Son, persevering through long years in imploring and supplicating the Divine Majesty ; and encourage thyself with his example to hope in the Divine Goodness even though it delay, for if thy trust waver not, God will not fail to fulfil it.

FORTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE HOPE EXERCISED BY OUR LADY, AND HOW WE SHOULD IMITATE HER IN THIS VIRTUE.

First Point.—Consider first, the firm hope that the Blessed Virgin had of obtaining from God all virtues and aids without wavering therein, on account of the difficulties that opposed themselves to their acquirement, as is seen in the vow she made of virginity, in the first moment of her conception, without having any example of such a vow, and having to undergo so many difficulties in keeping it. Ponder how lively were her faith and confidence in God, and beseech the Lord to give thee grace to imitate her, trusting in His goodness that He will give thee strength to undertake and execute arduous things in His holy service.

Second Point.—Consider how steadfast was the Blessed Virgin's trust in the Divine bounty, not only in difficult things, but even in those that appeared impossible and contrary to what she sought, as were the preserving of her virginity by marriage and the continuing a virgin in giving birth to a Son, and the glory of her Son, in His death; and so great was her hope that it exceeded that of Abraham, who, as St. Paul says, "against hope, believed in hope" (Rom. iv.)—that is, through means that appeared contrary thereto, as when he hoped to have succession from his son by sacrificing him to God. Consider how nothing is impossible to the power of God, and doubt not that in His pity He will bring thee victoriously through all the undertakings that He imposes on thee, how difficult soever they be.

Third Point.—Consider the trust that the Blessed Virgin had in God, in the trials and adversities that

assailed her during her life, such as in the poverty and abandonment of Bethlehem, on the night of her most blessed delivery, at the time of the persecution of Herod, during the exile of seven years in Egypt, when she lost her most Holy Son in the Temple, and during His passion and death, confident that He would rise again, and that by so contrary a road He would enter His glory. Contemplate in all these trials the heart of the Blessed Virgin—ever tranquil, steadfast, and constant, never wavering in the least, hoping ever of the Divine mercy the remedy of these adversities, and trusting by them to acquire higher rewards in glory, and do thou learn to trust in God in thy adversities.

Fourth Point.—Consider the constant hope our Lady had of obtaining from God all that she asked for her neighbours, never faltering in the least, even when the answer was delayed, or when she received an unpromising reply, as was the case at the marriage of Cana, when she asked that the want of wine should be supplied and Christ told her that it did not concern them—still she did not desist from her hope. Learn thou also not to waver in thine, even though thou shouldst ask many times without obtaining anything. Confide steadfastly and perseveringly, and thou shalt see the accomplishment of thy desire.

FORTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

For the Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany.

ON THE GRAIN OF MUSTARD SEED.

The gospel for to-day contains two parables—the first, that of the grain of mustard seed which, being very small, when sown, grows and becomes like a

tree ; the second, that of the woman who, with a little leaven, leavened three measures of meal. Such, says Christ, is the kingdom of heaven (Matt. xiii.)

First Point.—Consider that, as St. Jerome tells us, this grain of mustard seed of which Christ speaks is His Divine Word, and the preaching of the Gospel, which, although little, is more efficacious than the human teaching of all the philosophers ; and when sown in the hearts of the faithful, it grows and increases and brings forth fruit of eternal life. Give many thanks to God for having deigned to give us this Divine seed for the health of our souls, and endeavour to sow it in thy heart, in order that it may produce in thee the fruits of eternal life, which it gains for those who receive it as they ought.

Second Point.—Ponder how St. Austin says, that the grain of mustard seed is an antidote against poison, and preserves from contagion those who eat it ; and the like effects, in the spiritual order, are produced by the Divine Word, when heard in preachings, or read in the Holy Scriptures ; it preserves from heresy, and is an antidote against the contagion of vice ; from which thou shouldst derive a great love for the Divine Word and for the study of the Holy Scriptures and of good books, recognising how important this study is for the welfare of thy soul, and that if thou dost despise it, thou runnest great danger of falling into many errors and vices.

Third Point.—Consider that, as St. Jerome says, the man who sowed the grain of mustard seed is Christ, who sows the truths of His doctrine and holy dispositions in the hearts of men, from which thou shouldst derive increased esteem for the teaching and doctrine of the spiritual fathers, who instruct and advise thee on thy path to heaven ; and learn of what great importance they are to thy salvation, being persuaded that the words they address to thee are from God, that He speaks to thee by their mouth, and that it is He who sows the seed in thy heart. Behold how the angels hearken to His word and prize and obey it, and learn thence how thou shouldst

esteem and submit to it. Consider what thou wouldst do if Christ in person spoke and preached to thee; with what veneration and submission thou wouldst receive His words, and receive in like manner those which He addresses to thee by the mouth of His preachers and ministers, for it is He who speaks to thee through them, and tells thee what they advise. Ask for grace to put this in practice.

Fourth Point.—Consider what fruit the grain of mustard seed yields since being, as Christ says, so small, in a short time it grows and becomes a tree in which the birds of the air find shelter. Turn thine eyes on thyself, and consider how often Christ has sown the seed of His Divine Word and of His holy inspirations in the field of thy heart, and what fruit has it produced? See how it has been lost by thy negligence, and what account wilt thou give when He comes to require of thee the fruit it should have produced? and if (Luke xiii. 7) that fig-tree which was planted in the vineyard was condemned to be cut down and cast into the fire because in three years it gave no fruit, what sentence will He give against thee, who for so many years hast produced none? wasting thus the seed of His Divine Word. Cast thyself at His feet, and beg pardon for thy past neglect, and implore of Him time and grace to amend and to render His Divine seed so fruitful, that thou mayst repair thy past losses.

FORTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL AND THE MINISTERS OF CHRIST.

First Point.—Consider that, as St. John Chrysostom says, the grain of mustard seed that Christ sowed in the

field of His Church were His apostles and disciples who spread the branches of His preaching throughout the whole world, and such are still to-day His servants, and the faithful of whom thou art one, and thou shouldst be therefore like a grain of mustard seed sown in the Church by the hand of the Saviour for the good of thy soul and that of thy neighbours, figured by the birds of the air that find shelter on the tree. Contemplate the fruit that the apostles brought forth in the world, and compare it with that which thou dost yield, and see how far thou art from equalling them in merit, and stimulate thyself by their example to the fulfilment of thy obligations and the advancement of thy neighbours, teaching them, fostering them, sustaining them, and defending them.

Second Point.—Consider what Christ says, that the grain of mustard seed is the smallest of all seeds, and being sown it becomes the greatest of all herbs, and becomes a tree, in order to teach us that we should be humble, and that the lesser we are in our own estimation, the greater shall we become in the sight of God. Place thy hand on thy breast and see how little is thy growth in virtue, and that most probably thou hast rather fallen off than advanced therein, and observe whether this be not caused by thy pride and the presumption of thy heart, and by the high opinion thou hast of thyself. Humble thyself before God and man, and acknowledge thyself as worthless and the least of all, with all sincerity of heart, and by this means thou wilt profit and grow in the sight of God.

Third Point.—Consider how the grain of mustard seed is exteriorly unsightly and despicable, without beauty or show, and interiorly it contains great virtue; and compare thereunto Christ and His servants, because all their merit should be interior and hidden with humble sagacity, and like unto the tents of Solomon and the tabernacles of Cedar—exteriorly worn by the inclemency of the weather, but interiorly very rich and adorned with beauty. Thus does God will His servants to be,

and so would He have thee exteriorly poor and humble, worn with penance, and faded with mortification, but the interior of thy soul beautiful and spotless, pure, and adorned with all virtues. Behold, God looks on thee; Him thou canst not deceive, and take heed lest thou walk in a contrary direction to what He wills of thee, exteriorly much adorned, and interiorly very unsightly and defiled. Note how careful thou art of thy dress and food, of thy complexion, and of the adornment of thy body, and with regard to thy actions, that they may be showy and appear good in the eyes of men, and how great is thy neglect of what concerns thy soul; how little thou dost care whether it be pleasing or not in the sight of God and of His angels who behold it. Turn over a new leaf, deplore thy carelessness, and begin at once to serve the Lord and to mind the interests of thy soul, to the neglect of mere externals.

Fourth Point.—Consider the sharpness of the grain of mustard seed which, when bruised, burns, stings, and inflames the taste to the extent of bringing tears to the eyes, because the kingdom of heaven has to be won by mortification of the carnal appetites, by entering on the narrow path of life, denying ourselves in the taste of food and drink, and leaving the broad path of sensual delights, renouncing even relations and friends for the love of Christ, and also renouncing ourselves, suffering persecutions and toils, and carrying the cross after the Lord, in great patience and humility.

*FORTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.**For the Tuesday.*ON THE MYSTERIES OF FAITH, SIGNIFIED BY THE GRAIN
OF MUSTARD SEED.

First Point.—Consider how Christ says, in the gospel of St. Matthew, that if we had faith as a grain of mustard seed, we could say to a mountain, Remove from hence thither, and it would remove in obedience to our voice ; in which is evidently declared, that lively faith and the mysteries of His faith are signified by the grain of mustard seed, which is strong and ardent. Such, therefore, should our faith be, lively and not dead, burning with the fire of charity and holy works ; and if it be of this sort, and not tepid, frozen, without life nor spirit to do good, everything will seem easy to do and to suffer for God and eternal life.

Second Point.—Consider that the grain of mustard seed when whole has neither sharpness nor savour, but when bruised it becomes sharp, and burns the palate with its heat, even to drawing tears from the eyes. Thus, O my soul, are evangelical truths and the mysteries of faith which, as a whole, and when not scrutinised by meditation and prayer, excite no feelings in the soul, but when ground by means of meditation and contemplation, they arouse lively sentiments therein ; they inflame the spirit with the fire of fervent desires, and draw forth tears of true contrition, as David declares when he says, " In my meditation a fire shall flame out " (Ps. xxxviii.), because thereby the soul is enkindled with lively flames of yearning desires of serving God. Meditate, then, with David day and night on the Divine mysteries, in order that thy frozen heart may be inflamed in the service and fervent love of God.

Third Point.—Consider how the grain of mustard

seed has the virtue of purging the head, and this same virtue is possessed by catholic truths, for when meditated they purge the understanding of all error and evil doctrine, and banish ignorance by diffusing the light of knowledge wherewith to appreciate things at their true value, according to those words of David—"The declaration of Thy words giveth light : and giveth understanding to little ones" (Ps. cxviii. 130). Draw hence a great desire to meditate the Divine mysteries, and to be guided by their light.

Fourth Point.—Lastly, the grain of mustard seed flavours unsavoury viands and assists the digestion. O my soul ! if thou didst make use of this spiritual seasoning of prayer and contemplation of the life of Christ, and of evangelical truths, having them present to thy mind in all thy works, and ruminating them, how sweet would mortification and labour become to thee, and what great consolation thou wouldst find in toils endured for God ! Accompany all thy works with this most savoury seasoning, and thou wilt find sweetness and relish in all that appears most bitter and distasteful to the flesh to bear.

FORTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN OF THE GOSPEL.

First Point.—Consider how Christ compares the kingdom of heaven to the leaven with which a woman raises her meal ; because the preaching of the Gospel figured by the leaven seasoned the whole world throughout which God spread it and wherever it was received by men, banishing from their hearts the bitterness of infidelity, and leavening them with the doctrine of Christ. Give

Him thanks for this benefit, and beseech Him to leaven thy soul, in order that thou mayst know how to please Him, and that all thy actions may be acceptable to Him.

Second Point.—Consider how so small a quantity of leaven, as the apostles were in proportion to the world, was sufficient to leaven it with His holy doctrine. Ponder how powerful is the example of the good, and how great is the profit to be derived from their society; and, on the contrary, how pernicious is that of the wicked, which like bad leaven spoils the dough; and beg of God grace to fly from the society of the wicked, and to seek that of the good, in order to progress in His service.

Third Point.—Consider how God wills that the leaven of His elect shall not lie idle and without fruit, but rather that it shall work and be profitable for the leavening of others, and making good food for their souls. Turn thine eyes on thyself, and see how indolent thou art, and how much there is that thou couldst do in the service of God and which thou dost not; entreat His pardon for thy negligence, and solicit grace to serve Him in all things that are possible to thee.

Fourth Point.—Consider, with St. Thomas,¹ that the leaven was hidden in the meal in order to leaven it, for two reasons—First, because it is necessary to hide oneself with humility, in order to do the work of God, and not to be ostentatious, boasting with vainglory of the works done, and taking pride in them as though they sprang from our own power and not from that of God, to whom alone all the glory thereof is due. Secondly, because that which is hidden is preserved and not lost nor destroyed, and so is it with the virtue and talents that are employed in the service of God and of our neighbours, trusting in the Lord that they will not be lost to thee even though the whole world arm itself against thee, but that by the help of His Divine grace thou wilt increase thy crown.

¹ S. Thom. Catena.

*FORTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.**For the Thursday.*

ON THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR.

First Point.—Consider with St. Hilary that the leaven to which Christ compares His kingdom in the Gospel is the Lord Himself in the blessed Sacrament, under the species of bread, who, being of the same nature as ourselves, leavened the whole human race by His virtue. Contemplate this Lord so humbled for thee, and so inflamed with thy love that he hesitated not to become food and to give Himself to be eaten, in order to unite Himself with thee. Behold how great is the benefit He has conferred on thee alone, for He so loved thee that He would have done it for thee alone; and ravished with admiration at His immense love and incomprehensible bounty, cease not to render thanks to Him for so great a favour, and entreat all creatures to thank Him, saying to Him with David, What shall I render to the Lord for all the mercies He has done me, and for the benefits He has conferred upon me? I will take the chalice of His Blood, and the host of His Body: these shall be my thank-offering for so many benefits.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ says, that with a little leaven the whole of the meal is raised, however great its quantity, because our Lord in the blessed Sacrament raised the whole race of Adam, and removed from it the unsavouriness of evil and sinful inclinations, and disposed it to virtue. Place thy hand on thy breast, and consider how often thou hast received this celestial leaven of the blessed Sacrament, and what have been its effects on thee. Examine what is the condition of thy soul, whether it has changed thy bad dispositions into good ones, and whether thy heart has been thereby raised to God, or whether it is still possessed by self-love, and in-

clined to sensuality and love of honours and earthly possessions, and what is still more deplorable, to the vices and perverse habits of the old Adam. Weep over thy tepidity, and endeavour to correct thyself in order that this Divine food may work effectually in thee.

Third Point.—Consider with St. Thomas how Christ did not say that the wise woman placed the leaven in the meal, but that she hid it therein, because the wisdom of Christ, figured by the woman, hid His Body and Blood from the eyes of the flesh in this heavenly bread, and manifested them to those of the spirit. Open the eyes of thy soul, and contemplate the wisdom and goodness of God which shine forth therein, and learn to hide thy gifts from the eyes of men, the better to serve Him and to be the more agreeable in His sight.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the Saviour says, that the wise woman hid the leaven in three measures of meal, which St. Austin understands to signify the three powers of the soul—the understanding, the memory, and the will, because all three are sanctified by the leaven of this holy Sacrament;—the understanding receives light, wherewith to know and understand the hidden mysteries of God, and all that is important to the welfare of the soul; the memory is purified from the vanity of the age, and moved to sweetest devotion by the knowledge of heavenly truths and mysteries, which it keeps ever before the mind; the will is excited by fervent desires to serve God always, and to aspire after perfection, and is inflamed with Divine love. Consider attentively what passes in thy soul. Examine thy understanding, thy memory, and thy will, and see whether they be cleansed from the dross of earth and illuminated by the light and brightness of this sovereign Lord. Beseech Him to visit thee, to leaven, enlighten, purify, and inflame thy soul with His Divine love, and cease not to entreat Him until thou hast obtained this favour from His hand, for He hears the voice that calls to Him, and He opens wide the door to him who knocks.

FORTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE PASSION OF CHRIST, SIGNIFIED BY THE GRAIN OF MUSTARD SEED.

First Point.—Consider with St. Hilary that the grain of mustard seed to which Christ compares the kingdom of heaven is the Lord Himself in His sacred Passion, because, as this grain, when ground, discovers its properties and communicates them to men ; so in like manner Christ, when ground down by the torments of His Passion, shows forth His great virtue, and communicates it to man for his redemption from captivity. Apply thy mind to the contemplation of all He suffered for thee, delivering thee from the bondage of sin and the chains of Satan at so great a cost ; and give Him infinite thanks for this mercy, offering thyself to be His slave, since He bought thee at the price of His Blood. Drive His nails into thy heart, and let it be thy glory to serve Him eternally.

Second Point.—Consider that, as St. Austin says, the grain of mustard seed is an antidote against poison, and Christ, the Divine grain, when bruised in His Passion, is an antidote against the poison of vice—for which reason the spouse of the canticles compares Him to a bundle of myrrh¹ which preserves from corruption, and says that she carries it in her breast near her heart. Thou livest in a world infected with the contagion of vice, and tainted in every part with the venom of evil customs. Avail thyself of this antidote, and drop not this bundle of myrrh out of thy hand, in order that this contagion may not touch thee, lest thou lose thereby the life of thy soul.

Third Point.—Consider that mustard seasons all viands, and its flavour gives a relish to those naturally unsavoury, in which is revealed another of the proper-

¹ Cant. i.

ties of the Passion of Christ, of which it is a figure, which is to give a relish for all that is most distasteful to human nature, penance, mortification of the passions, obedience and external austerities, trials, affronts, persecutions, sickness, and poverty—all become savoury with this grain of mustard of the Passion of Christ. Ruminates this in meditation. Contemplate all that Christ endured for thy love, and all that He obtained for thee by His Passion, and everything will become easy and tasteful to thee for His sake, and thou wilt desire to suffer more each day for Him.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the Saviour says of the grain of mustard, that being put into the ground it germinates, grows, and becomes a tree on which the birds of the air build their nests, find rest, and multiply; because Christ, who in His Passion was so humbled and reduced, when buried rose again and grew to great glory; and His cross is the tree on which the just repose, and whence they rise up from earth to heaven to enjoy God, and are multiplied in the world. O my soul! that thou shouldst find means to build thy nest in this salutary tree of the cross of Christ, and to enter like a chaste dove into the cleft of the rock on which the Church is built, which is riven by the nails, and opened by the lance, the instruments of His Passion; how thou wouldst repose therein, and rise above the miseries of earth to the riches of heaven. Make use of the wings of contemplation, and fly to the crest of this tree and repose in its arms; unite thyself to God, and thou wilt find peace, pardon, grace, and glory for ever.

*FORTY-NINTH MEDITATION.**For the Saturday.*

ON OUR LADY, FIGURED BY THE WOMAN WHO LEAVENED
HER MEAL.

First Point.—Consider that the woman of whom the Saviour says, that she leavened her meal with some leaven, signifies the Blessed Virgin, who gave us Christ—who, as St. Hilary says, was the leaven that raised the race of Adam; wherefore we owe to Christ all our welfare as its source, and to the Blessed Virgin as the mediatrix from whose hand we derive it. Consider all thou owest to this Lady for so many benefits as thou receivest from her hand, and especially for having given thee the Saviour for the remedy of thy sin. Beg of her to obtain for thee grace to profit thereby.

Second Point.—This little leaven signifies Christ in the blessed Sacrament contained in the small host of the altar, which the Blessed Virgin gives thee to render thy soul savoury before God. Whenever thou dost approach the altar, imagine that thou receivest it from her hand, and that it is that Lady who gives thee that morsel of sacramental bread prepared by her hands; receive it as hers with gratitude, and beg of her to obtain for thee grace to bring forth the fruits it produces in those who receive it worthily.

Third Point.—According to St. Austin, this leaven signifies grace and the love of God, which inflames the soul and seasons the heart so as to render it a worthy dwelling-place for Him. This, says St. Bernard,¹ the Blessed Virgin obtains for us like that woman who took leaven and therewith leavened all the meal. Turn thine eyes on thyself and see how unleavened thou art through mortal sin, and how unsavoury before God. Entreat the

¹ Berm. Serm. de Aquaduct.

Blessed Virgin to obtain for thee some particle of the leaven of His love, wherewith thy heart may be leavened and rendered agreeable to Him.

Fourth Point.—Consider how this leaven is devotion to our Lady, which she grants to all who prepare themselves to serve her ; and she hides it in the meal, because it is not to be exterior, but to penetrate to the interior of the heart, making us love her as a mother, and filling the three measures of the understanding, the memory, and the will—meditating her virtues with the understanding, and having her ever present to thy memory, and loving her with the most cordial affection of thy will. Prostrate thyself at her feet, and offer her thy thoughts, desires, words, and works, and say to her with all the affection of thy soul, O Lady, I here offer myself wholly to thee, and I beseech thee to take me under thy protection, and to have regard not to what I am but to what thou art, and to thy great mercy. Thou art the mother of sinners and of the race of Adam, who dost leaven all of us who have lost the grace of God, and are become distasteful to Him. Extend thy hand, sweet Lady, and leaven my heart with the leaven of Divine grace, in order that by thy intercession it may be worthy to be presented at the table of the Lord.

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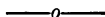
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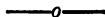
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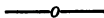
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Second Part

CONTAINS

MEDITATIONS FROM SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY TO CHAIR
SATURDAY, INCLUSIVE.



TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH

OF

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DAILY MEDITATIONS.



FIRST MEDITATION.

For Septuagesima Sunday.

ON THE PARABLE OF THE HOUSEHOLDER AND THE VINEYARD.

CHRIST tell us (Matt. xx.) that the kingdom of heaven is like unto a householder, who went out early in the morning, and at different hours, to hire labourers into his vineyard; and when the evening was come, he ordered his steward to pay them their hire, beginning by the last even unto the first, on receiving which, these latter murmured against him, and he appeased them saying that he might, without doing them any wrong, give to the others the same as to them. From this the Saviour concludes that in the same manner in His kingdom, the last will be preferred to the first; for many are called, but few are chosen.

First Point.—Consider the watchfulness of the householder, who at early dawn was in the market-place to hire labourers for his vineyard; which signifies the care that Christ takes of His Church, providing her in all times with teachers, confessors, and doctors, who work and labour in her, plucking out heresies, uprooting evil customs, and planting in her good and holy ones, and like good prelates and fathers of His family, preserve her in her vigour, and improve her every day. Give

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thanks to God for the care He has of His Church, and for that which He takes of thee in particular, and of thy parents, pastors, and masters, whom He has given thee for the good of thy soul, which, were it not for them, would be like an arid waste, without springs of devotion, or light or teaching to lead thee in the road to heaven.

Second Point.—Consider that this vineyard is thy soul, and enter into it slowly and with attention; see what care thou hast for its improvement, whether thou watchest over it, as the householder watched at all hours over his; whether its value is increased or diminished. Tremble at the account which thou wilt have to give of thyself to the householder, and at once give all thy care and watchfulness to its cultivation, plucking out the weeds of vice and planting virtues in their place.

Third Point.—Consider how all those called by the householder obeyed his summons and went with him, not one excusing himself. Remember how many times Christ has called thee and thou hast been deaf to His voice, and hast resisted His call, and how important it is to thee to obey Him and follow His holy inspirations and the advice which He gives thee by means of thy spiritual fathers, and of holy books. Strike thy breast and cry to thy Lord from the inmost recesses of thy heart and say: "It grieves me, my God, to have been so ungrateful and so unmindful of Thy voice, I have erred foolishly and thoughtlessly, here I throw myself at Thy feet, waiting for Thy call, and for the slightest indication of Thy will; speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth; declare Thy will, command what Thou pleasest, and in all and through all, I will obey Thee.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the evening being come, the householder ordered that the labourers should be paid their hire, in which our Lord shows how at the close of the day of this life, when the hour of death arrives, God will

give the prize of their labours to those who shall have served Him. It will not be then, as with men of the world, who keep back the wages of their servants when they have served them many years, but for the work of one day, He will give a crown of glory to His followers. Weigh well how quickly the labours of this world will end, and the Lord will come to reward His servants, and fix thine eyes on the value of the eternal prize with which God pays His chosen ones, so that Thy will may be inflamed with a fervent desire to serve Him.

SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE LABOURERS IN THE VINEYARD OF CHRIST.

First Point.—Consider how the householder who went out at early dawn to take labourers into his vineyard, is God, who at all hours calls men to His service, and that none come to His vineyard, save those called by Him, and if thou findest thyself in it, give Him many thanks for the grace He has given thee, without any merit on thy part, whilst so many others are left outside, who, had they been called, would have served Him much better than thou dost. Consider how many have been kept out of the Church by the blindness of idolatry, of heresy, and of various sects, which deceive them, and cast them down into the depths of hell. Pray to the angels to bless God for this incomparable mercy which He has shown thee, and give Him with them, endless praises each day, and beg of Him the grace to be grateful to Him, and to serve Him in return for so great a benefit.

Second Point.—Consider that thou art one of the

labourers whom Christ our Lord has called to work in His vineyard, and reflect that He called thee to work and not to be idle. Remember that the householder reprimanded those who were idle, because God grieves to see those whom He has called to Himself idle in His service. Fly from this vice as from thy greatest enemy, and rouse thyself to work with energy in the vineyard of the Lord, keeping in mind the mercies He has granted thee and the prize that He has prepared for the services thou mayest render Him.

Third Point.—Consider how, in the payment of the wages, He preferred those who came the last, and who only worked one hour in His vineyard, but with such fervour that they deserved to be preferred to the first, who worked negligently all the day; because in the house of God, time is not regarded, but work. If thou hast been many years in His house, examine carefully what thou hast done for His service; for if others in one hour have profited more than thou in all thy life, at the time of payment they will be preferred to thee, and the Lord will give them a greater and more ample reward; and if thou hast been but a short time in His service, exert thyself to labour so that in one hour thou mayest deserve as much as those who have laboured a long time.

Fourth Point.—Consider the sentence with which Christ concludes, "Many are called, and few are chosen," which St. Chrysostom understands of those called to the faith and chosen for heaven; because even among Christians there are many who are condemned and few who are saved. O my soul! how much hast thou to meditate on in these words. Oh! if thou wouldst contemplate with the light of heaven what it is to be condemned for ever, and what it is to be saved, and to enter into glory. Go down in thought to hell and see what passes there, and the sad and irrevocable fate of the condemned, and then rise in the same contemplation to heaven and consider the glory of the blessed, compare the one with

the other and thou wilt find a greater distance between them than there is from heaven to earth ; and that to be condemned is so sad and wretched a thing, that, if it were to happen to only one person in the world, we ought all to tremble lest that fate should be ours. How much more, then, ought we to tremble on hearing from the mouth of the Saviour that many will be condemned and few saved. Go a step further and consider that of necessity thou must be of one or the other class, and that there is no way or means of exempting thyself from the number ; pause on this thought, and turn to God with sincere contrition of soul and say to Him, I have sinned, O God, against Thee, I am grieved to the soul for having offended Thee, because Thou art what Thou art, and I beseech Thee to support me by Thy power, and to give me Thy grace that I may begin from this day to serve Thee, and may be of the few and one of the chosen.

THIRD MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON FERVOUR IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

First Point.—Consider how the householder went out at early dawn, and at various hours of the day, in search of labourers for his vineyard ; teaching thus to prelates, ecclesiastical superiors, and laymen how vigilantly they should watch over the vineyard that God has confided to them, neglecting their personal comforts to see after the good of those committed to them. If thou be one of them, learn from the householder what obligations are incumbent upon thee, and if being under obedience these obligations do not concern thee, pray to God for thy prelates and superiors, that He may give them His Spirit

to fulfil rightly their duties, and that He may send His Church many zealous and watchful prelates to direct and govern her with the necessary energy and vigilance.

Second Point.—Consider how the householder called the labourers into his vineyard at different hours, for God calls some in their childhood, when reason first dawns on them ; others in their youth, and others when already old, at the time when the sun of life is about to set, and when only one hour remains to work in, during which they often merit more than those who began in childhood. Therefore do not despise any one though thou seest him pass his life negligently, for thou dost not know when God will call him, and whether in one hour he may not serve Him more than thou hast done in all thy life. Lament over thy indifference, and acknowledge how little thou dost compared with what thou mightest do, and ask God's grace to serve Him fervently.

Third Point.—Consider how those who came first to the vineyard murmured unjustly against the householder, *although* he paid them their full hire, alleging that they had borne the whole weight of the day and the heat of the summer sun ; in which our Lord teaches us that the lukewarm and negligent are ever full of jealousy towards the fervent, and of complaints and murmurings against their superiors, and in this way they render their own burden heavy, because they are wanting in courage to bear it. Meditate on all this, and lay thy hand on thy heart and see if thou art of this number, or of the fervent, and how important it is for thee to be of the latter rather than of the former. Consider that the lukewarm are not pleasing to God, and that they sicken Him by their complaints and murmurs ; and if thou findest thy burden heavy and the yoke of the divine law hard to bear, understand that thy want of fervour is the cause, and weep and bewail over it, with anguish of heart, in the presence of God, asking Him to give thee one spark of fervour that thou mayest serve Him henceforth joyfully and diligently.

Fourth Point.—Consider that God has called thee to be a labourer and not a master in His vineyard, for, as Cajetan says, the labourer works for his Lord, and all thy labours should be for God, Who is the owner of the vineyard. See that thou dost not take to thyself these labours, attributing their glory to thyself, for they are not thine ; but rather refer them to Him Whose they are, seeking in them, as becomes a true servant, His glory and His honour and not thine own ; thus they will be a gain to thee, whereas if thou dost otherwise, they will be lost, for God will take them from thee as from a defrauder of His honour and glory.

FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON CHRIST CALLING US, AFTER THE MANNER OF A
TEMPORAL KING.

First Point.—Put before thine eyes a temporal king, chosen by the hand of God and endowed with all graces and gifts that can be desired, both natural and supernatural ; noble, rich, handsome, learned, generous, upright, benign, powerful, clever in all respects, the friend and companion of his vassals, whom he loves, esteems, and honours more than his own children ; whom instead of overwhelming with taxes he assists and succours out of his revenues ; whose laws are mild, whose government is gentle, and whose whole demeanour is affable ; the first to labour, the last to rest, in order to devote himself entirely to his subjects. Reflect how worthy such a king would be of the love, esteem, and obedience of his vassals, and how by his love and benefits he would win all hearts.

Second Point.—Consider that this king, assembling his

vassals, informs them, in mild and courteous words, that he has the intention of subjugating his enemies and establishing peace in his dominions, for which purpose a war is indispensable, and that he himself will be the first to take the field, inviting them all to accompany him on the condition that they shall share alike with himself in their food, as well as in their dress, arms, quarters, perils, and dangers, and finally in the spoils and in the crown of victory. Then reflect what faithful vassals should answer to a king so worthy of being loved and served, and with what zeal and valour loyal subjects ought to offer themselves to go at his side and serve him with their persons, their property, and their arms, even to laying down their lives in his service ; and what an ignominious affront it would be on the part of those cowards, who, for the sake of enjoying their ease, would allow him to go alone, and would refuse to follow in so glorious an enterprise a master who had offered so high a reward.

Third Point.—Apply this meditation to Christ, the King of kings and the Lord of eternity. Consider what advantages He has over all temporal kings in all graces and virtues. Consider what cordial love He bestows on all His elect, whose names are engraven on His own heart, and see with what intentions He came down from heaven to earth ; namely, to subject the world to His law and service, to deliver it from the bondage of sin and the slavery of Satan, and to show all men the way to heaven ; for which enterprise He enlists armies of angels, and invites all men to accompany Him in the war as His equals in all things,—in their food, clothing, bed, lodging, arms, perils, and in the crown which follows victory. Consider what should be man's answer to his King and Lord who offers His life for him ; with what resolution and valour His faithful and true friends will offer themselves to follow Him, proffering their lives, their possessions, and all that they have or can hope for, to serve Him ; and what ignominious conduct it would be in those who, seeing Him depart, should allow Him to

go alone, turning a deaf ear to His voice in order to enjoy their pleasures and remain inactive ; and how undeserving such men would be of any further graces.

Fourth Point.—Turn now thine eyes on thyself, and consider how many times God has called thee, and how many invitations He has given thee, and still gives thee, to follow Him, walking in His footsteps and bearing His livery. See Him taking the road of poverty, obedience, humility, contumely, patience, and meekness, with such mortification and contempt of what the world adores and the flesh covets ; whilst thou not only art deaf to His voice and leavest Him to go alone, but also takest in all things the contrary road, and leaguest thyself with His enemies, giving thyself up to the vices, honours, and riches of the world. Open thine eyes and observe the ignominy into which thou fallest in the sight of God and of the whole heavenly court which looks down on thee, and what reward thou mayest expect from God in this life and in the next, for this world passes away like smoke. Look to thyself, therefore, beg pardon of God for thy sins, and correct thy cowardice, offering thyself to follow Him with zeal and courage all the days of thy life.

FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE CALL OF CHRIST TO FOLLOW HIM AFTER THE
MANNER OF A CAPTAIN IN TIME OF WAR.

First Point.—Consider how Christ came to conquer the world, wage war against hell, and deliver mankind from the tyranny of Satan, for which purpose He assembles His armies and calls and summons them for this war ; whilst on the opposite side, the devil, opposing himself to Christ, forms his camp and armies to resist Him and

oppose His intentions ; and see which of these two thou shouldst follow, for it is necessary that thou shouldst follow one only, for thou canst not follow both, and if thou followest Christ thou must entirely renounce Satan and his army.

Second Point.—Consider, on a high and strong mountain near Babylon, the city of confusion, Lucifer, seated as on a throne of fire, smoke, mist, and darkness, his banner in his hand, and all his ministers around him, to whom he addresses a discourse with much noise and pride, ordering and persuading them to traverse the world, laying snares for men, alluring them with desires of riches, honours, and delights, in order to induce them to fall into sin, and thus precipitate them into hell. Consider here how he makes use of a throne and banner, for there is no honour to which he does not pretend, and no means of which he does not make use of for our perdition ; he is seated on a mountain, by his pride, on a stony one by his hardness and dryness of heart, and the absence of all good desires and thoughts ; he is throwing out fire by his cruelty and smoke by the obscurity that he engenders in the souls of those on whom he lays hands. Ruminates on this truth, and through it thou wilt know the qualities of the evil spirit, so that thou mayest not be misled by his cunning nor fall into his snares.

Third Point.—Consider in the country of Damascus, or in that of Jerusalem, the city of peace, Christ our Lord in a humble but flowery and pleasant valley, with a white banner in His hand, His angels and disciples in His presence, whom He exhorts in a mild voice, and with a serene countenance, to go into the world and preach to all men the true road to life, exhorting them to poverty and contempt of riches, to mortification and the rejection of all sensual delights, and to humility, despising the honours of this world to acquire those that are eternal. Thus the way to eternal life lies in these three virtues : poverty, mortification, and humility, as that to eternal death lies in the contrary vices of inordinate covetous-

ness, sensual delights, and pride. Ponder on all that has been said, and especially on the humility and meekness of Christ, and on His words and advice, and ask God to give thee light to know His voice and His spirit, in order to follow and obey Him in all things.

Fourth Point.—Meditate on the harangues of each of the two captains, on their intentions, the end of their undertakings, and the reward of their victory ; hear them both, and see which of the two thou hast followed till now, and which thou shouldst follow in future. Listen to the voice of God calling thee to follow Him, and to that of the angels and ministers whom He has sent thee, who have spoken to thee from Him, and still speak to thee every day, and do not turn a deaf ear to His call, but rather fervently resolve to follow Him and serve Him during this short life, abandoning all that the world adores, for thus thou wilt deserve to enjoy the crown He bestows in the kingdom of glory.

SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE ELECTION OF A STATE OF LIFE.

First Point.—Consider that success in making the choice of a state of life depends wholly on taking the proper means for the desired end ; as he who desires to become a man of letters or a great soldier chooses the means which will give him the greatest help in attaining his object ; and if the choice of means be not well directed to the desired end, all his labour will be frustrated. Thus in the choice of a state of life thou must be impartial, as is fitting in a matter of so great importance, in order to take without human respect or passion that state which will help thee most to the end thou desirest, and ask God

for light to know it, and embrace it with all love, resolution, and good will.

Second Point.—Consider the end for which God created thee, and towards which thou must direct thy state, which is, to serve Him in this life and enjoy Him in the next. This is the mark that thou must dispassionately keep in view in the election, and according to it thou must consider before God thy condition, inclination, passions, strength, and vocation, and in what state thou wilt have most aptitude for serving God, fewest occasions of offending Him, and means best proportioned to thy strength for pleasing Him and for reaching perfection. Think with Christian prudence what state is most fitted for thee, and though it appear hard and difficult, choose it with valour and confidence in God, who will give thee His grace for it, putting aside all human respect, convenience, pleasure, fortune, and honour in this world, which do not help, but rather hinder in serving God.

Third Point.—To obtain more light in this election and divine vocation, consider before God what state thou wouldst wish to have embraced at the hour of death, when thou wilt be on the point of going out of this world, in which thou must leave all that thou mayst have acquired. Also place thyself before the tribunal of Christ, giving an account of thy life ; and thus with this mortal life ended and the eternal beginning, in that critical moment see which state thou wouldst choose, if it were then given thee to elect, and which thou wouldst then wish to have followed, and despise not the light that God may give thee, turn not a deaf ear to His voice, that He may not then turn a deaf ear to thine.

Fourth Point.—After pondering, deliberating, and weighing in an exact balance all these reasons, thou must make thine election with the firm resolution to die in the state that thou chocest ; then, prostrate before the Divine Majesty, offer Him thine election, and the state that thou chocest for His holy service. Ask affectionately for His grace to fulfil thy purpose and the obligations

of thy state, and with the divine help, proceed to the execution, and enter with boldness and fervour to labour in the vineyard of the Lord.

SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON OUR LADY MOTHER OF THE FAMILY OF THE CHURCH.

First Point.—Consider that in the same way as Christ is the Father, so the Blessed Virgin is the Mother of the family of the Church to which thou dost belong, and thus thou shouldst regard her as thy Mother. Rejoice to possess such a Mother, and that she should be also the Mother of all the faithful, and should consider them all as her own children, and thee in particular. Beg of her to be a mother to thee, and as such to teach, shelter, protect, and defend thee from all thine enemies, visible and invisible, both of body and soul.

Second Point.—Consider how Our Lady watches over the family of the Church, going out at all hours of the day to call men to her service; some at dawn of reason; others when more advanced in years, and others in their old age, and after they have fallen into many sins, bringing them, by devotion to her, to her divine Son, that He may pardon them and enrol them amongst His elect. Give thanks to the Blessed Virgin for this the vigilant watch that she keeps over all men, and for that which she has kept and still keeps over thyself. Recall to thy mind the benefits that thou hast received at her hands, and offer thyself anew to her service, being ever most attentive to her voice, as her faithful servant, ready to do whatever she may command.

Third Point.—Consider how Our Lady also sees to the recompense of the labourers of the vineyard of the

Lord, which she solicits in heaven from her most Blessed Son, in order that they should receive the reward they have deserved, and that she always advocates their cause. Rejoice to have such a mediatrix, and beg of her, as she remembers all, not to forget thee, though thy lukewarmness may deserve it; but to exercise her pity in thy favour, a poor sinner, before her Son.

Fourth Point.—Consider that thou art the servant of this Lady, and that she has called and brought thee into her vineyard, in order that thou mayst labour, for which reason thou must not be idle, but eager and intent on the things of her service; and as the servant does not work for himself, but for his master, offer all thy actions to the Blessed Virgin, as to thy Lady, seeking in them, not praise and esteem for thyself, but her glory, her honour, and her service. Say to her with deeper affection of heart—"I here offer thee, O Lady, all that I am and all that I may do; as thy unworthy servant, I offer at thy feet my thoughts, works, and desires, my words and all my labours, and the actions of my whole life; I beg of thee to accept me for thy slave, and to hold me by the hand, that thou mayst never forget me or separate me for one moment from thy service."

EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For Sexagesima Sunday.

ON THE GOSPEL.

The gospel for the day is from St. Luke (Luke iv.), and contains the parable of the sower, three parts of whose seed was wasted, and one part fructified, and gave such an abundant harvest that he recovered in it all that he had lost, in which parable Christ declares that in some

men the seed is wasted, but in others it brings forth much fruit.

First Point.—Consider that, as St. Chrysostom and the Venerable Bede says, the sower, of whom mention is here made, is the Son of God, Who came down from heaven on earth, not to punish it, as when He sought Adam, but to sow it and enrich it with His gifts. Look at the earth, dry, arid, and without fruit, and the Son of God, Who changes it into a paradise with the seed of His divine Word. Give Him hearty thanks for having deigned to grant this grace to the world, and ask Him not to forget thee, nor to leave thy heart dry and without fruit, but rather to water it with the dew of His grace, and to sow it and make it fruitful with the seed of His divine Word.

Second Point.—Consider how the Saviour says that the Word of God is a seed, not only on account of the fruit that it brings forth in souls, but because the seed is sown in autumn, and gives fruit in the summer. Do not grieve thyself if thou do not at once feel the fruit of the Word of God, but keep it and shelter it in thy heart, for it will bring forth fruit in due time, and when God will be best served. Despair not either of thy neighbours if thou do not see them improve as they ought by instructions; but patiently hope in the goodness of God, and pray Him to send down on all the dew of His grace, with which to fructify in thee and in all men the seed of His Word.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ says that the Word of God is His own seed, for, as St. Gregory tells us, sometimes the seed is sown by the hand of prophets, at others by that of apostles or preachers, confessors or superiors; but it is always His, and ought to be received and heard as if it came from His mouth. Learn from this the esteem that thou shouldst have for the Word of God, and for those who preach it, and how thou shouldst hear and obey. Consider and ponder deeply with what attention and respect thou wouldst listen to Christ, and how thou wouldst obey Him in whatever He might command, and

remember that thou shouldst listen in the same manner to preachers and spiritual fathers, for the words they use are His, and it is He Who speaks to thee by their mouth. Give thanks for this grace, and beg for a renewal of it in order to obtain the fruit of the divine seed in thy soul.

Fourth Point.—Ponder over what the sacred evangelist remarks, namely, that whilst preaching Christ cried out with great feeling, for out of the four parts of the seed three were wasted, and one only bore fruit. Enter into thyself, and see how many parts have been wasted of the seed that God has sown in thy soul, now by sermons, now by inspirations, again by good advice, then by the holy examples of thy neighbours, and thou wilt find that hardly one in a hundred has brought forth fruit. What, then, will be the grief of our Saviour at seeing so great a part of the seed of His Word lost in thee? See what account thou wilt give to God for these precious pearls with which others have in a short time laid up great treasures of merit, whilst thou after so many years findest thyself poorer than before. Cry aloud to the Lord, and ask Him to pardon thee, and since He gives the seed and the fruit, to have pity on thee, and to give thee His Holy Spirit, that, labouring with it, His divine Word may fructify in thee, and bring forth the fruit His divine majesty desires.

NINTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE SEED OF THE WORD OF GOD.

First Point.—Consider on this day the reasons for which three parts of the seed were wasted, and how the fourth part was saved, and brought forth such abundant fruit that it made up for the loss of the three that

were wasted. The first part was wasted because it fell on a road, and was trodden down by those who passed that way, for the Word of God is lost on those who are constantly mixing in the world, and are like a public road, all of whom lose, as St. Cyril says, the juice of devotion, and remain dry and arid in spirit, so that the Word of God brings forth no fruit in them. See how important recollection is to thee, and separate thyself from the frequent concourse of men, in which thou lovest the spiritual fruit of thy soul, interior devotion, and peace ; and seek in future to retire and hide thyself, lest these obstacles should prevent so great a good as the fructifying of divine inspirations, and of the advice and counsels of His holy Word.

Second Point.—Consider that the second part of the seed was lost because it fell amongst stones, and found no moisture to make it grow and give fruit, for, as the Venerable Bede says, the Word of God is wasted when it falls on hearts of stone, hard and rebellious to His Voice ; and if at any time they are moved by it to do something in His service, at the least difficulty or contradiction they give up, and turn away from the good they had begun. Enter into account with thyself, and see how much of this divine seed has been wasted in thee ; for, having shunned the contradictions which have presented themselves, be convinced that if thou hast God for a friend thou wilt always have the devil for an enemy, and that go where thou wilt he will always wage war against thee, and that it is worth eternal life to thee that thou shouldst fight manfully, and that thou shouldst make His holy Word fruitful in thee ; for this it is necessary that it should take deep root in thy heart, so that no wind of temptation can root it up, and that it cannot take root if thy heart is of stone and hardened against the divine Voice. Meditate deeply this truth, and see what means thou shouldst take to lose thy hardness, and become docile and obedient to God's Word. Ask our Lord to take away from thee thy heart of stone, and to give thee one

of flesh, as He promised to do for His followers, to enable thee to love Him and serve Him, and be yielding and obedient to His Voice.

Third Point.—Consider that the third portion of the seed was wasted, because it fell among thorns, which, as the Saviour explains, signifies the cares, the riches, and delights of the world, which choke the seed of the Word of God. Give all thy attention to this sentence of Christ, and contemplate how the delights of the world, the honours and dignities that men so long for and take such pleasure in when obtained, are thorns for the soul. Weep over this deception in which they live, and by which thou thyself art carried away, esteeming them and seeking after them so blindly; for as St. Gregory says, they prick and injure the soul like thorns, at the same time that they gratify the body; see how much more important to thee is thy soul than thy body, and spiritual than temporal good, and take very much to heart to uproot from thy soul all these thorns which have not allowed the Word of God to grow in thee, and from the bottom of thy heart ask Him to give thee His grace and fervour to do it.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the fourth part of the seed took root, because it fell on good ground—soft, clean, and retired from the roads and frequented places of men, which, as the Saviour says, signifies those who receive His Word in a good and fervent heart, and bring forth fruit in patience, hoping in the mercy of God. See what thy heart is like, and if it has the qualities which are necessary for the fructification of the Divine seed, and what fruit it gives and has given, and ask of God His grace to correct thyself in future, and to bring forth His Divine Word with great increase.

*TENTH MEDITATION.**For the Tuesday.*

ON THE DOCTRINE OF THE GOSPEL.

First Point.—Consider those words of the Gospel in which our Saviour says that the devil cometh and taketh the Word out of the hearts of men, lest believing they should be saved, in which He declares the importance of hearing the Divine Word and sheltering it in the heart, which is no less than that of salvation itself, and the diligence which the enemy employs to prevent our hearing it, should make thee more diligent to hear and preserve it. Consider how important it is to thee to lend a willing ear to God, and not to neglect His Word from carelessness or human respect, or to lose any opportunity of instruction, for thou knowest not on what thy salvation may depend.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ did not explain this parable to the people, but only to His disciples; for as St. Theophilus says, “He does not give the food of His doctrine to those who do not make it bear fruit, and thus He leaves them dry and hungry, as unworthy of it, whilst He gives it to those who do make it bring forth fruit, and who receive it as they should.” See how many sermons thou hast heard, and how little fruit thou hast produced in thy heart; fear, lest God should harden thy heart, so that hearing thou shouldst not understand, and that thus thou lose, as unworthy, the fruits of His Divine Word, and beg of the Lord to give thee, as He did to His disciples, light and understanding to comprehend it.

Third Point.—Consider the abundant fruit which the seed that fell on the good ground gave, since in it the diligent labourer recovered all that had been lost in the rest. Think deeply on the fruit of merits that thou canst

gain in this life for the next, putting into execution the counsels that God gives thee by means of His preachers, and of the spiritual Fathers who govern thee. Think what joy thou wilt have at the time of the harvest, when thou wilt reap the fruit of thy labours, like that of the husbandmen when they gather in their crops and house their wheat, and what sorrow if, through carelessness or neglect, thou hast not obtained it. Consider the grief that thou wilt feel for not having profited by the occasions that God gives thee to enrich thyself with the seed of His Divine Word, and that the time and occasion that thou lovest will not return; that now thou canst merit, and that afterwards thou wilt not be able, the career of thy pilgrimage once ended; and therefore, now that thou canst merit and gain such abundant fruits, make haste and ask of God His grace to bring them forth as thou shouldst.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the seed that yielded fruit gave one day thirty, another sixty, and another a hundred for one; so that there were three kinds of earth that lost the seed by their bad quality, and other three which by their goodness made it fruitful, and in these the labourer regained what he had lost in the first, which, had they not lost it, would have given equal fruit. Here thou must reflect that the seed that fell on the road ought to have given thirty for one, and that which fell amongst stones should have given sixty, and that which fell amongst thorns a hundred for one, and not only was the fruit lost, but it produced fuel with which to be kindled and burnt. O my soul! if thou dost not make the Word of God fruitful, profiting by it as thou shouldst, thou wilt lose the fruit and it will turn to thorns, which will serve as fuel to the fire of thy torment; see that in proportion as thou pleasest thyself in this world, and givest thyself up to the riches, honours, and dignities that thou adorest, so much the greater will be thy loss and the torment that thou preparest for thyself to suffer hereafter: labour, then, now in cultivating and cleans-

ing the earth of thy heart, so as to render fruitful the inspirations and the words of our Lord, and to gain rich merits at a hundred for one that thou mayest enjoy them eternally in heaven.

ELEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE FEAR OF GOD.

First Point.—Consider how the holy fear of God is a gift of the Holy Ghost, and one of the most powerful checks that a soul can have to restrain it from offending God, and a spur to become more fervent in His service, according to the words of Ecclesiastes, “He that feareth God neglecteth nothing” (Eccles. vii. 19). And in another place, “Fear God, and keep His commandments, for this is all man” (Eccles. xii. 13); and, as David says, “The fear of the Lord is holy, enduring for ever and ever” (Ps. xviii. 10). It is the beginning of wisdom, and where all those who wish to serve God must begin; for he who fears God will do good, and it will go well with him at the close of life. For the fear of God is glory and praise, joy and exultation. Meditate on all these prerogatives of the holy fear of God, and kindle thy heart with lively desires to obtain and possess it; and ask God to give it thee with His grace to preserve and maintain thyself in it for ever.

Second Point.—Consider how, out of the four parts of the seed, three were lost, by which Christ shows us that those who are condemned are three times more numerous than those that are saved; because the gifts and divine graces that are wasted, are much greater in number than those that are profited by it. Consider how many mercies thou hast received from God, the calls to perfec

tion that He has given thee, as well as help and grace to do good, and of how few thou hast made use, for not even a fourth, or an eighth, or a twentieth part has given fruit in thy soul. Then what will become of thee on the day of judgment, and what account wilt thou give of all the divine treasures that God has committed to thy care? Tremble for His judgments, and weep over thy neglect and the errors of thy past life, and begin from this hour to improve thy conduct, to fear God, and to regain what thou hast lost.

Third Point.—Consider the rigour of the justice of God, and that being so merciful, it still agrees with His clemency to condemn the greater part of mankind, to have so many souls in hell, and to torment them with such rigorous pains that no created intelligence can comprehend them, and see if it will not be compatible with God's mercy to condemn thee if thou wilt not subject thyself to His holy law. Consider how many there are in hell, who have not sinned half so much as thou, and tremble at this wickedness, in the presence of God, and give Him thanks for the mercies He has conferred on thee in not precipitating thee into hell, and begin at once to serve Him with fervour and with fear of offending Him.

Fourth Point.—Consider the love that God has for thee, greater than all that can be said, and the mercy that He has shown thee, and always continues to show thee without ceasing, and the return that thou owest to such a Lord; let thy heart kindle with lively desires to serve Him and love Him most intensely, and from this love let there bud forth in thy soul a filial fear of offending Him, desiring and purposing most firmly to die a thousand deaths rather than commit the least offence against His Divine Majesty, because He is Who He is, and because of the love He has for thee, and of the benefits thou receivest at His hand. Offer thyself at His feet, and beg of Him to engender in thee this filial love and fear such as the elect have, and not considering thy sins, to inscribe thee among the number of His children.

TWELFTH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

First Point.—Consider that as St. Augustin teaches, this grain and seed, that Christ came to sow on earth, is the grain of wheat of His most holy Body in the sacrament of the altar, which being sown in our hearts is the seed of eternal glory ; for to him who receives it, as he ought, it gives eternal life. Render thanks to God for so incomparable a benefit, as that which He conferred on the human race, and on thee in particular, whom He had in His mind when He instituted this most holy Sacrament, and rejoice over this favour which He did not grant even to the angels or to any other creature for the singular love that He bore man, and ask Him to make thee worthy to serve Him.

Second Point.—Consider how of that seed a great portion was wasted, and one portion only was used with great profit, not through the fault of the sower or of the seed, but through the bad quality of the earth, as St. Thomas remarks ; and in the same way it is with the seed that came down from heaven, for although it is the seed of eternal life, not all of it bears fruit, but a great portion is lost by the fault of those who receive it to the great detriment of their souls. Weep over so great a loss, and see how many times this seed has been sown in thy heart, and how many times the fruit has been lost through thy fault ; pay attention to the fruit that thou hast obtained from it, and by that thou wilt see all that thou hast lost of spiritual growth ; weep over thyself, begging pardon of Christ and promising amendment in future.

Third Point.—Consider the causes through which in the Gospel the seed was lost, namely, the concourse of

men who trod it down, the hardness of the earth on which it fell, the thorns and brambles which choked it at its birth, and the remedy which was to clear the earth of the thorns, water it in order to soften it, and guard it from those who passed that they might not tread on it. The same occurs with the heavenly seed of the most blessed Sacrament, the fruit of which is lost in the society of men and the tumult of business, which occupies those who receive it, and by the hardness of the heart, dry as a stone, without the juice of devotion, and by the brambles and thorns of sins which spring from evil inclinations, and thus the remedy is, that which the apostle St. Paul gives us, namely, to till the earth of our hearts, cleansing it from every vice and purifying it from all remains of evil inclinations or sin, however venial it be, and moisten it with the water of prayer and meditation, with which are obtained tenderness of heart, devotion, and loving affection towards God our Lord, and retire from men in silence and solitude, saying adieu to all earthly business that distracts and disturbs the soul and does not allow the Divine seed to take root and grow in it. Enter by consideration into thine own heart and meditate deeply, turning over in thy mind what has already been said, on what it is that prevents thee from drawing all the fruit thou mightest from thy communions, and beg of God His grace, to cultivate thy soul and to dispose thyself, as thou shouldst, to receive this Lord and to bring forth the fruits that the saints bring forth.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the part of the seed that fructified did not all give the same fruit, though it was all of equal value ; for one part of it gave thirty, and another sixty, and another a hundred for one, which denotes the difference of the fruit that this celestial and sacramental seed produces in those who receive it ; for though of itself it is always the same and has the same virtue, still on account of the difference of those who receive it, it gives different fruits according to each one's

disposition ; in some less, in others more, and there is so great a difference, that, as St. Bonaventure says, "One communion made with fervour is worth more than many made lukewarmly or with little preparation, and if the whole world were placed in one side of a scale, and in the other the least part of the fruit that is lost by him who communicates coldly, this last would weigh more than the whole world together." O my soul ! where art thou that thou dost not consider this, and how much thou hast lost and still lovest in each communion ? If thou weepest over the loss of honour and riches, and still more for that of bodily health, why dost thou not weep with tears of blood over such great losses of thy soul, and dost not employ all thy strength to recover them ? See what St. Luke says, that Christ cried loudly when relating the losses of the seed on account of the great pain that they caused in His soul. What mournful cries will He not put forth for the fruit that thou hast each day lost in Holy Communion ! O Divine Sower, dry Thy tears, for I am grieved at my past losses, and firmly purpose to mend in future, and to labour for their recovery in the Communions that I shall henceforth make, if Thou wilt give me Thy grace so to do.

THIRTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE PASSION OF CHRIST OUR LORD ACCORDING TO THE
DOCTRINE OF THE GOSPEL.

First Point.—Consider that as St. Hilary says,¹ Christ is the grain and seed ground in His sacred Passion with so many and such grievous torments for our love. Turn over in thy mind all that Christ suffered, and move thy-

¹ St. Hilar. apud Thom. in Cat.

self to compassion and gratitude towards this Divine Saviour, considering all that thou shouldst do in return for so great a love and such numerous benefits as those that He has conferred on thee by suffering for thee.

Second Point.—Consider that as St. Gregory says, Christ was, as it were, sown and planted in His sepulchre, and that there He brought forth the copious fruits of His sacred Passion; plant Him in thy soul and give Him place in it by meditating on what He suffered in His Passion. Look on that Ear of corn from the promised land of Heaven, which raises Itself up from the earth on the stem of His cross crowned with thorns, white and red with the dye of His blood, ripe for the harvest; see how death approaches, and harvest-time with its sickle and the tomb in the earth, from which It buds forth beautiful and luxuriant much more than those which Pharaoh saw, for the sustenance of the whole human race, and take courage in thy trials and tribulations; and if thou seest thyself buried and trampled on, suffer in patience, following the example of thy Saviour, for if thou art His companion on the cross, thou wilt also partake of His crown.

Third Point.—Consider that as that seed flourished in some earths and not in others, the same happened and happens every day to the celestial seed of the Passion of our Lord, for as St. Paul (1 Cor.) says, some are scandalised at it, and others ignore its virtue, because they do not meditate on it or understand its value, and in others, as in a good earth, it gives very abundant fruits of sanctity, patience, mortification, penance, and of many other virtues, as may be seen in the martyrs, monks, and other religious and spiritual persons who meditate on Christ crucified and with His example excite themselves to imitate Him. Put before thyself the image of the Holy Crucifix, see thyself in that mirror, and excite thyself with His example to look at Him in the innumerable virtues that He set forth in His Passion. Sow this celestial seed in thy soul, and shelter it with meditation; cleanse the earth of thy heart from all brambles

and thorns of vices, that it may bring forth in thee abundant fruits of merits for glory.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the Saviour says, that the seed that fell on good earth and gave a hundred for one, represents those who receive His Word and bring forth fruit in patience, for without it they could not give fruit; therefore patience is necessary for thee in order that the Word of God may fructify in thee. Take up thy cross and travel after Jesus; suffer in patience, imitating His Passion if thou wilt bear fruit of merits for heaven. Contemplate Him nailed to the cross, and thou wilt obtain valour to suffer and merit.

FOURTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY AND THE FRUIT THAT THE
SEED OF HEAVEN BROUGHT FORTH IN HER.

First Point.—Consider how in the Blessed Virgin was verified what Christ said about the good earth and the good seed representing those who receive the Word of God in a heart not only good but perfect in the most superlative degree, who retain it, preserve it, and give fruit in patience; for after Christ there was no heart so clean and pure as Mary's, nor one which received His Word with more esteem, and kept it with more care, or gave fruit of greater or more perfect works. Ponder over all these things, rejoice at her sanctity, and give a thousand thanks to God for what He did in this heavenly Princess, and ask of her to teach thee how to make the mercies of God fructify in thee.

Second Point.—Consider how she cherished the holy inspirations and the graces that God gave her, and the talents with which He enriched her, working with all

most perfectly, and augmenting her riches every instant, without allowing any flower of good thought to be lost, until it was changed into fruit of good works, nor any occasion of serving God or her neighbour without improving it with admirable fervour and charity ; and thus her sanctity went on increasing every instant, augmenting the riches of her treasure in the mines of heaven. Contemplate the sanctity of that soul, and how greatly it pleased the majesty of God, by its works and the very abundant fruits which the seed it received from His hand produced, and with what pleasure God sowed in so generous a soil ; and learn how to make the seed of heaven fructify in thy soul, and how to work and labour with the talents and Divine inspirations that His Divine Majesty gives thee.

Third Point.—Consider how that grain of the Eternal Word that the Father sowed in the earth of her virginal womb also brought forth fruit. Contemplate the humility, reverence, gratitude, and devotion with which she received Him, guarded Him, and served Him as her King and Lord, and the gift of the Eternal Father ; and consider the fruits of life that He gave to all the world, and the especial ones of grace and glory that He gave to the Virgin herself. Glorify God our Lord for all this, and for having shown Himself so glorious and liberal with this celestial Queen and Lady, and beg of Him His favour that the celestial grain may bring forth fruit when it is sown in thy breast.

Fourth Point.—Review with the eye of consideration all the three aforesaid points, and compare thy negligence with the fervour of the Queen of Heaven, thy ingratitude with her gratitude, thy sterility with the fecundity of her good works ; humble thyself in her presence, and beg of her grace to imitate her examples, working with her, and bringing forth fruit from the celestial seed that God sows in the soil of thy breast.

*FIFTEENTH MEDITATION.**For Quinquagesima Sunday.*

ON THE PASSION OF CHRIST OUR REDEEMER.

The Gospel (Luke xviii.) relates how Christ, going up to Jerusalem, foretold His Passion to His disciples, and cured a blind beggar, who, meeting Him on the road, prayed to Him for sight, and then followed Him glorifying God.

First Point.—Consider point by point the narration that Christ makes of His Passion, saying that He has to be sold, taken prisoner, and delivered up to the princes of the priests, scoffed, spit upon, scourged, and lastly put to death ignominiously; then ponder more especially the joy with which He goes up to suffer, and, as St. Chrysostom says, He declared by this conduct that He died because He chose spontaneously to do so for men, and in particular for thee, and thou refusest to suffer the least thing for His sake. Blush for the little that thou lovest Him, and to see how far thou art from following and imitating Him; and consider that on another occasion when Christ went up to Jerusalem He wept bitterly, considering as present the destruction that came on that city many years after; whilst now, seeing His Passion so near, He does not weep or show regret on His own account, for He suffers joyfully for thee.

Second Point.—Consider that word of Christ, "The Son of man shall be betrayed." He did not say who was to betray Him, not that He was ignorant, but because it was one of His disciples, and a preacher of the gospel, and He would not publish his sin on account of his reputation; teaching us by this to consider the good name of our neighbours, and to return good for evil even unto death to all who offend us. O my Lord, what high virtue is this! Assist me that I may imitate Thee in it, being

silent as to the defects of my neighbours, and returning good for evil to all my enemies.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ in narrating His Passion at the same time named the prize that He was to receive for it, saying, “And the third day He will rise again,” uniting the one with the other, that we may know that the day of suffering is the eve of glory, that glory is linked with patience, and honour with dishonour, if suffered for His love. Remember in thy sufferings the prize that thou mayest merit by them, and the crown that God has prepared for those who bear His cross, and how soon it will come, and thou wilt see thyself glorious and honoured. Excite thyself with this hope to bear thy cross with joy for the love of Jesus.

Fourth Point.—Consider that Christ whilst occupied with His Passion gave sight to a blind man who asked it of Him on the road, in order that we may know that the memory of His passion gives light to the soul and cures the blindness of the world. O my soul, if thou wert to meditate deeply on all that thy Redeemer did and said, worked and suffered in His Passion, what light wouldst thou not obtain to be delivered from the blindness in which thou livest, longing for the honours of the world, loving and seeking after perishable things, esteeming what has no value, and allowing thyself to be carried away by the blind inclinations of the flesh ! Take this bitter gall of the Passion of Jesus and put it on thine eyes, looking at it and meditating deeply on it, and it will give thee better sight than that which Tobias obtained from the gall of the fish. Consider how He accepts dishonour and despises honours ; how He remains silent and does not accept the protection of the president ; how, being able, He does not defend Himself, nor does He permit the legions of angels to defend Him ; how He embraces the sufferings, the buffetings, the thorns, the stripes, the nails of His cross, and the rest that occurred in His Passion, to cure the blindness of the world and thine, who in all things seekest the contrary ; and beg of Christ with

this blind man to give thee eyes to see and light to perceive the value of eternal and the emptiness of temporal things, so as to love the former and despise the latter.

SIXTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE SIGHT THAT CHRIST GAVE TO THE BEGGAR.

First Point.—Consider how this blind man was a symbol of the sinner—poor in regard to true riches, a slave of creatures, begging at their doors, seated by the road-side in the repose of his vices and neglectful of his salvation, for, with the true way that leads to heaven in sight, he yet wanders, lost among precipices, at the risk of falling at each step and throwing himself into hell. Turn thine eyes on thyself, and consider the state into which thou hast fallen by sin, and weep and lament thy misery, and conceive for it the horror it deserves. Look on thyself, blind, poor, and a beggar, without light or guidance, neglectful, and going astray in the blindness of thy vices, following without restraint thy inordinate appetites ; and cry aloud to the Lord with this blind man begging for sight and health, “Jesu, fili David, miserere mei.”

Second Point.—Consider how the blind man cried out to Jesus, and those who passed by chided and reviled him, but for all that he did not desist from his clamour, until he obtained the fulfilment of his petition : in which he teaches thee to cry out to God in thy necessities, and what great hindrances are the hurry of temporal things which pass away with time, and exterior cares which distract the soul from prayer and do not allow it to cry to God ; but, like the blind man, thou must not desist but

persevere, clamouring and praying until thou obtainest the object of thy petition.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ stopped at the voice of the blind man and ordered His disciples to bring him to Him and cured him, in which thou hast much to learn. First, how the prayer of the poor man detained Christ; from which learn the power of prayer, which detains God on His way, and makes Him stop and succour our necessities, and cry out in thine, and say with the blind man, “Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me,” and do not let Him pass until He has heard and cured thee, as He did the blind man. Secondly, learn of the Saviour to stop when thou hearest the voice of the poor, and do not pass on without assisting them in their necessities, as far as thou canst. Thirdly, remark how easily Christ might have gone up to the blind man; but He did not do so, and ordered His disciples to bring him, in order that we might learn that it is the office of the apostles to bring the blind to God, and that He sends His disciples, and thee also, if thou wouldst be one of them, that thou mayest bring to Him as many as thou canst of those that are blind in the soul, that He may give them sight. Consider how many remain blind because thou dost not bring them to Him, and that there are a great number who, blinded by their passions, are throwing themselves into the abyss, because thou dost not give them a helping hand to bring them to the knowledge of God. Grieve over thy want of charity, and seek in future the good of thy neighbours, loving them as thyself, and doing for them the offices that thou wouldst have them do for thee.

Fourth Point.—Consider how, when Christ gave sight to the blind man, he followed Him, rendering Him a thousand thanks, and all the people glorified God; in which we should consider two things: first, the gratitude of this blind man, not only in words glorifying God, but in works, following Him as a disciple with the rest,—thus shouldest thou give Him thanks for the mercies He

has shown thee, not only by word praising His goodness, but also by deeds, serving Him and following Him, and making thyself His disciple, for He has given thee eyes that thou mayest follow Him, serving Him whithersoever He goes. Secondly, remark how all those who before prevented the blind man from crying out to Christ, afterwards helped him to give thanks and praise for the mercy he had received. If thou hast courage to persevere in calling on God without yielding to the opposition of men, thou wilt feel His Divine favour, and those very ones who contradict thee will immediately change and help thee to bless God. Contemplate the joy of this blind man when he recovered his sight, and the joy of his soul when he saw the light of heaven, and by it Christ who gave it him, both in his body and in his soul, that he might know Him, confess Him, follow Him, and serve Him. O happy blind man! who in one instant dost obtain so much good. O merciful Lord! who thus hearest him who calls on Thee. Shut not Thine ears to my cries, Lord, have mercy on me, and give me sight that I may know Thee, love Thee, follow Thee, and serve Thee eternally. Amen.

SEVENTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE JOURNEY OF CHRIST TO JERUSALEM.

First Point.—Consider that the Evangelist says that Christ, going up to Jerusalem, conversed as He went with His disciples on His Passion, for it is by it that we go up to the celestial Jerusalem, where we find true peace, and enjoy the vision of God. Consider how Christ smoothed this road for us by means of His Passion, and opened for us the gate of heaven at the cost of His

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blood by the greatness of His love. Give Him thanks for this incomparable benefit, and for the love that He had for thee, and the immense sufferings He underwent for thee, and beg of Him grace to follow Him, and suffer for His love.

Second Point.—Consider how the Evangelist speaks in the plural when he says that they all went up to Jerusalem, and in the singular when he speaks of suffering, saying that Christ alone was to be delivered to the princes of the priests, and mocked, scourged, crucified, and put to death, for He took the pain for Himself alone, and left us the repose of glory. O my soul! contemplate the delicacy of thy Redeemer's love, and how differently thou conductest thyself towards thy neighbours, behaving in so contrary a manner that thou takest for thyself the repose, and throwest the cross on their shoulders; and at the example of thy Master, change thy conduct, taking for thyself the cross and suffering, so that others may have relief and comfort, and cease not to render thanks to God for the ardent charity with which He loves thee.

Third Point.—Consider how much Christ suffered, and that thy sins were the cause of His Passion. Thou didst prepare the cross for Him by thine offences, thou didst crown Him with thorns by thy foolish vanities, thou didst embitter His palate by thy daintiness, thou didst wound Him from head to foot with thy sensuality, and didst dishonour Him and spit upon Him with thy vainglory, punctiliousness, and contempt for thy neighbour. Contemplate the havoc thou hast wrought in the person of thy Redeemer, weep bitterly over thy sins, throw thyself at His feet, and beg for His pardon and grace to mend and do penance for thy faults, so as not to crucify Him again, but to serve Him with most tender love.

Fourth Point.—Consider the greatness of this benefit, and that Christ goes up to Jerusalem with His cross, and tells thee to take up thine, and to follow Him with it, if

thou wouldst enter with Him. Be not deaf to His voice, but take up thy cross and follow Jesus; and since He converses on the road about His Passion, imitate Him by speaking of it in thy conversations, for by this road thou hast to go up to heaven, talking of His death, meditating on His Passion, and suffering with patience all labours for His love. Offer thyself from thy heart to follow and imitate Him if thou desirest to obtain the crown.¹

EIGHTEENTH MEDITATION.

For Ash Wednesday.

ON THE DOCTRINE OF THE GOSPEL AND THE CEREMONY OF THE ASHES.

The Gospel contains that part of Christ's doctrine (Matt. vi.) in which He commands us to fly hypocrisy and the vain esteem of men, and to lay up our treasure, not on earth, but in heaven, with spiritual and eternal riches.

First Point.—Consider how vain and deceitful are the judgments of men, and how little value we ought to set on their approbation; and do not lose works of such value as are those of virtue and penance, with which thou canst gain eternal life, by displaying them before the eyes of men. Consider that on the one hand God and His angels and all the celestial court are looking at thee, and on the other mortal men: these latter only see the exterior part of thine actions, which come before their eyes, while the former see both the exterior and the interior of thy heart. The judgment of men is erroneous

¹ As the time of Lent is dedicated to the Passion of Christ Our Lord, we will give two meditations, one on the Gospel of the day, and another on the Passion, following each step of our Saviour; one meditation may serve for the morning, and the other for the evening, according to the devotion of each one.

and various, for some condemn what others praise ; but that of God and His angels is exact and true, appreciating everything at its just value. If thou seekest the esteem of men, thou seekest a most empty vanity, and a wind that passes away and disappears in an instant ; but if thou seekest in thine actions to please God, doing them all with the same love and recollection as if He were before thee, thou wilt obtain solid and true honour. Consider, then, which of these assemblies thou wouldst please, and the difference that there is between the one and the other, in number as well as in importance, and resolve most firmly to fly from the vainglory of this world, hiding thy works from the eyes of men, and manifesting them only to those of God.

Second Point.—Consider the reason that Christ gives for us to fly hypocrisy and vainglory ; for those who seek them in the good deeds they perform, lose the merit thereof, and the reward that they would otherwise have received from God. Consider what reward this is—its quality, its value, its duration—which competes with eternity, and the price for which thou givest it up ; that is, a vain word of approval from men, which is a little air, and like a shadow, without being or substance, and do not love thyself so ill as to change so precious a jewel for a thing so vile, so vain, and valueless.

Third Point.—Consider to what Christ exhorts thee : namely, to treasure up in heaven true and immortal riches, and not to lay up on earth frail and perishable ones. Compare attentively the value of the first with that of the second, then the reality of spiritual and the falseness of temporal riches and the duration of each ; and that even if the second were in themselves eternal and solid like the first, they would not be so for thee, as very soon they will be taken from thee ; for as Ecclesiastes says of the end of man, “He shall take nothing away with him of his labour” (Eccles. v. 14). Bring back to thy mind all those rich and powerful persons that thou hast known in this world, and who are

already in the next. See what became of their treasures, and how of all, they took away nothing but a poor winding-sheet, whilst others triumph and enjoy themselves with their riches ; and how only their good works accompanied them, and the same will befall thee without defence or appeal. Draw for thy profit the consequence of all this, and say to God : O Lord, how great a mistake it is to serve the world, and to seek after perishable and false things instead of Thy glory and service, which is true and eternal. Sustain me with Thy hand, lest I should fall into such an error, and give me Thy grace to despise all that the world loves, and to place my treasure and my heart always in heaven.

Fourth Point.—Consider that the means of not falling into this error is to keep before thy mind the fact of thy mortality. Remember that thou art ashes, and that within a very short time thou wilt have to return to ashes, as the Church admonishes thee, and consider, as St. Bernard advises, What thou wast, what thou art, and what thou wilt be ; for in thy creation thou wast a handful of earth, at present thou art nothing but rottenness and corruption, covered as with snow by the exterior complexion of thy body, and thou journeyest without ever stopping one instant towards the darkness of death, where thou wilt become the food of worms and most filthy earth, and ultimately dust and ashes ; this is what thou wast, what thou art, and what thou wilt become, as all those who have gone before thee were and are, and already thou hast forgotten them. How, then, in the light of this truth canst thou be vain ? What castles in the air will not fall to the ground if built on such a foundation ? And who, knowing this truth, will seek riches in this world ? Dig deep into this most rich mine of self-knowledge, and thou wilt find an inestimable treasure of light, of humility, of contempt of the world and esteem of heaven, and of hunger and thirst after the only true riches.

NINETEENTH MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

ON THE MANNER IN WHICH CHRIST BADE FAREWELL TO HIS MOST HOLY MOTHER ON GOING TO SUFFER HIS PASSION AND DEATH.

The seraphic doctor St. Bonaventure,¹ in his meditations on the life of Christ, having arrived at His sacred Passion, commences by this one; thus following his footsteps, we place it first, dividing into several points what the holy doctor puts all in one.

First Point.—Consider the obedience to His eternal Father that Christ shows in this action, leaving mother, kindred, and disciples to go and execute His commands; and the respect that He had for His most holy Mother, in asking her benediction, before going to suffer and die for the human race; from which thou shouldst learn that it is thy duty to leave thy parents, brothers, relations, and friends to obey God when it is necessary for the execution of His commands, and at the same time the respect in which thou must hold thy natural parents, not undertaking anything without obtaining their benediction. Beg of Christ to give thee grace to walk in His footsteps, and to imitate His example that thou mayest know how to please Him in all things by fulfilling thy duty.

Second Point.—Consider that, as St. Bonaventure says, Christ, on the Wednesday before his Passion, being at Bethania in the house of St. Mary Magdalen and St. Martha, with His most holy Mother, retired apart and seated alone with her, told her, in a few and deeply-felt words, that the time was already come for His Passion and death which would soon come to pass; that she must have patience and give Him her benediction and leave to go

¹ Bonav. Med. lxxii. De Vita Cristi.

and suffer in obedience to His Eternal Father, who had so ordained it, and be consoled, for that in a few days He would visit her again, risen and glorious. Consider the sword of grief that would penetrate that Mother's heart on hearing such words from her most holy Son, and how she would enter into herself and offer with most prompt obedience that most agreeable sacrifice to the Eternal Father, submitting herself to His eternal and divine will; how her tongue would be dumb, but her eyes would speak with tender tears, born of her loving and aching heart; let them not fall to the ground, but collect them in thy heart. Behold those two loving ones weeping living tears for thy sake, their hearts speaking to each other, and conforming themselves most perfectly with the will of God. Enter by that consideration into that retreat, and into the interior of those hearts, and compassionate their grief and learn to conform thyself in whatever befalls thee to the will of God, and offer thyself to His most holy Son and to the Blessed Virgin, to suffer for Him not only that death, but a thousand deaths if necessary, that He may not be separated from His Mother, or give her reason for so much grief.

Third Point.—Consider how St. Bonaventure says that Christ being thus apart with His most holy Mother, St. Mary Magdalen entered and begged of Him to remain in her house to celebrate that Pasch with His disciples; and that the Saviour answered that He could not avoid going up to Jerusalem to celebrate it; and that then the saint said to Our Lady that they would all go and accompany Him and celebrate it in His society, and they did as she had said. Contemplate the tender love of this servant of the Lord, which never allowed her to separate herself from His society; consider the love with which she offered Him her house, and offer Him thine and thy heart and thy soul for Him to remain in it; and beg of Him with all possible earnestness not to leave thee as unworthy, but to consider His mercy and to accept thine offer, and enter into thy poor house, as He entered and

took shelter in that of St. Mary Magdalen and of her sister Martha.

Fourth Point.—Consider how, on this occasion, Christ declared to St. Mary Magdalen the secret of His Passion, and how He would take leave of her and of her sister Martha, and of the other holy women who followed Him, and would recommend them to His holy Mother, and charge them to assist and console the Virgin to whom He would also leave the care of His Church. Ponder over in thy mind the grief and cries of these holy women on hearing such news from the mouth of the Saviour, the tears that they would shed, and the inconsolable grief that they would feel, and how Christ would comfort them with loving words and most tender reasonings, offering to visit them soon in His glorious resurrection; how they would embrace the Virgin and kiss her hands and feet, and offer themselves to die for her Son; and as they were so holy and taught by Christ, they would lift up their hearts to heaven and would offer that Divine sacrifice, and with it their wills and desires, and would conform themselves in all things to God's Holy Will, and Christ would take leave of them, giving them His holy benediction. Meditate with tenderness this passage, and do not let Christ leave thee without blessing thee also.

TWENTIETH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE CENTURION WHO CAME TO CHRIST TO ASK FOR THE HEALTH OF HIS SON.—(MATT. VIII.)

The sacred text says that a centurion came to Christ and told Him that his son was ill, and Christ offered to go and cure him; but the centurion considering himself unworthy to receive Christ into his house, said that with

one word of His He could cure him ; and Christ praising his faith, cured his son in that hour.

First Point.—Consider the care and diligence that the centurion made use of to procure the health of his son, for being so noble, rich and powerful, he did not hesitate to come in person to pray Christ for him, and to throw himself at His feet, begging of Him to cure his child ; and grieve on the one hand, to see what little pity thou hast for those who belong to thee, and on the other thy neglect and carelessness with regard to thy soul, which is the most precious jewel of thy house, and that which is most important to thee, and perhaps it is that which thou neglectest most ; it is sick with the infirmity of many sins and vicious and wicked habits, and though it cries out to thee, thou dost not hear it nor art moved to come to Christ and beg of Him, like the centurion, to cure it. Follow his example and seek the Doctor of thy soul, throwing thyself at His feet, and beg of Him to cure thee, and desist not in thy petition until thou obtainest this grace of the Lord.

Second Point.—Consider the mercy and promptitude of Christ in granting most liberally what was asked of Him ; for on the centurion saying that his son was ill, without further delay He answered, “I will come and heal him.” Learn on the one hand to be ever ready to do charity to the needy, to the utmost of thy power, relieving their wants without delay, and on the other to confide in the goodness of God and to appeal to Him with all confidence in thy wants, for thou hast so prompt and generous a Lord, that thou wilt no sooner have given utterance to thy petition than He will grant thy request.

Third Point.—Consider the humility of the centurion, who did not think himself worthy to receive Christ in his house, and his lively faith, for he believed that from that very place the Saviour could cure his son by His only word, and accordingly he said so to the Lord, who, admiring his faith, lifted up His voice before all the

people and praised him in words of great eulogium. Turn thine eyes on thyself and see what is thy faith, and if Christ would praise or would condemn it, complaining that thou hast so little and that it is so dead in thy heart. Notice how many mercies the absence of it hinders thee from receiving at His hand, and beg of God to give thee faith, and to make thee worthy of His grace like the centurion.

Fourth Point. — Consider the son of the centurion dying, and that at the very moment when Christ, absent from him in the body though present in spirit, said the word, he was cured. Ponder, on the one hand, how easy it is to God to give health to the sick, and that nothing is impossible to Him, and acquire great confidence in His mercy, that thou wilt obtain whatever thou askest of Him, if thou disposest thyself to deserve it; and, on the other hand, consider the joy of all that house, and especially that of the father and of the son, on the recovery of his health, and lift thyself up in spirit to consider how very much greater must be the joy that the angels feel at the recovery of the spiritual health of the soul that returns from sin to grace, and that which thou shouldest feel at thine own, and place thyself at thy Saviour's feet, and beg of Him most earnestly not to leave thee sick when He gives health to others.

TWENTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

ON THE PREPARATION THAT CHRIST MADE FOR THE
CELEBRATION OF THE PASCH.

First Point. — Consider how Christ came from Bethania, where His relations and friends were, to celebrate the Pasch at Jerusalem, where He knew that a cross and

death were being prepared for Him ; for Bethania signifies the house of affliction, and Jerusalem vision of peace, in which Christ gives us to understand that amongst kindred and friends there is nothing but affliction and trials for the soul ; but in Jerusalem, by the cross and persecutions, peace and the clear vision of God are obtained. Follow this instruction and accompany Christ in His Passion, leaving thy relations and friends, and the delights of this world, and thou wilt obtain true peace.

Second Point.—Consider that our Saviour did not accept the offer that St. Mary Magdalen made Him of her house for the celebration of the Pasch, in order, as St. Bonaventure says, not to be a burden to her poverty, and on account of the firm confidence that He had in God that He should want for nothing, as indeed He did not ; and learn to confide in the Divine goodness in thy necessities, and be assured that if thou dost not abandon God He will not abandon thee, and that His mercy will be proportioned to thy confidence.

Third Point.—Christ sends Peter and John to prepare the supper-room that He may go with His disciples to celebrate the Pasch. Peter signifies good action, and John devout contemplation ; in which He teaches us that these two virtues, action and contemplation of heavenly things, are to prepare the soul for Him to come to her and celebrate the Pasch of spiritual joy ; if thou wouldest have Christ enter into thy house, and grant thee many mercies, thou shouldest adorn it principally with these two virtues, contemplating the Divine mysteries and performing those actions that God gives thee to understand in prayer. See if thou hast done so up to this time, and if thou hast been wanting in these two virtues, beg them of the Lord, and also pray that He may give thee grace to dispose thyself as thou shouldst to receive Him into thy house.

Fourth Point.—Consider the directions that Christ gave by which to know the house where He would go to and celebrate the Pasch ; namely, that into which

they saw a man enter carrying a pitcher of water, and consider how this water precedes Christ to the place into which He is going, to wash and purify it from all spot, and how the water of tears and of contrition must first enter thy soul to purify it from all the stains of sin, in order to make it a worthy dwelling-place for Him. O Lord, wash me yet more and more from the stains of my sins, and cleanse and purify me from my evil habits, that I may be worthy to receive Thee into my poor house! If thou, Lord, dost not wash and prepare me, how shall I know how, or be able to wash myself,—I, a most unworthy sinner, who have nothing of myself but abominations and sins? Would that I could dissolve myself all into tears of true contrition to cleanse my soul. Give them me Thyself, and purify me in such manner that I may never more offend Thee, and that my poor dwelling may be thine for ever and ever. Amen.

TWENTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE LOVE OF ENEMIES.

Christ exhorts us in the Gospel to follow His counsels, not those of the world, forgiving and doing good to our enemies, in order that we may be sons of His Father who is in heaven.

First Point.—Consider how the world always errs in its counsels, which are always contrary to those of God, and do not follow them that thou be not lost, as have those always been who have followed them. From the beginning the world was a homicide, and taught vengeance in return for pity and meekness. Cry out to God, and beg for His favour in order not to follow such erroneous advice, which tends to thy destruction.

Second Point.—Consider that Christ tells thee to pardon thine enemies, supposing that they will not be wanting to thee ; but that thou wilt have them in whatever place thou art, persuade thyself that God sends them to thee to be a trial, and a crown for thee, think over this slowly, and cast a glance over the course of thy life, and thou wilt see that thou hast never been without something to suffer and prepare thyself for the fight not to wound others or defend thyself ; but to suffer with patience the persecutions of thine enemies, returning good for evil for the love of God. Place thyself at His feet and say to Him with a willing heart : Lord, I here offer myself to Thee, may Thy Divine will be done, ~~if~~ it be Thy will that I should have enemies, blessed be Thou, I give Thee thanks for it ; give me Thy blessing that I may have patience and may know how to love and do good as Thou hast commanded to those that hate me and do me evil.

Third Point.—Consider the enemies that Christ had in the course of His life, and how He never took vengeance on them ; but always showed love for them, and did good to them, and prayed for them to His Eternal Father, begging of Him to have mercy on them when they offended Him most grievously : listen to the lesson He gave thee from the pulpit of His cross, and learn to pray for those that offend thee according to the example of thy Saviour.

Fourth Point.—Consider the recompense that Christ offers to those who shall forgive their enemies and do good to them, namely, that they shall be the children of His heavenly Father, for he deserves the name of son who follows Christ's counsels and imitates His virtues. Consider how easily God could each day avenge Himself on those who offend Him ; but so far from doing so, He never ceases to do good to them, preserving their lives, giving them sustenance and making His sun shine and His rain fall on them, the same as on the just. Oh, if I had but understanding to meditate and strength to imitate it !

O thou that teachest me, give me them ! Consider what a high dignity it is to be son of God, for, as St. Paul says (Rom. iv.), sons are the natural heirs of their fathers, and those of God are heirs of His celestial kingdom : this is what thou gainest if thou forgivest thy enemies from thy heart, and this is what thou lovest if thou seekest revenge. Think much on this, and remember in the presence of the Lord those who have revenged themselves and are now in hell, and those who have forgiven and are in heaven, and see which of these thou wouldst follow, and beg of the Lord grace to follow the good and not to imitate the wicked.

TWENTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

ON THE LEGAL SUPPER THAT CHRIST CELEBRATED WITH HIS DISCIPLES.—(MATT. XXVI.)

First Point.—Consider how Christ fulfilled the law and all its ceremonies, keeping them all most punctually, and learn of so great a Master to keep the law of God and all its ceremonies with the greatest exactitude, as also the rules and ordinances of thy state or profession, according to the example of the Saviour, and beg of Him His grace to imitate Him in this, as in everything else.

Second Point.—Enter into that supper room, and see with the eyes of thy soul Christ our Lord at table with His disciples. Contemplate the modesty, the gravity, and silence which they all observe ; the temperance that prevails there in what they eat and drink and in all their actions ; and learn how thou shouldst conduct thyself at thy meals, begging of the Lord His help not to commit any excess in them.

Third Point.—Consider the principal dish at that banquet, in which is placed, under the eyes of Christ, that

roasted lamb, which was an image of Himself; the immaculate Lamb seasoned by the fire of His love, and crucified and wounded by so many torments. Contemplate the Saviour, seeing Himself in that mirror when His Passion was already so near, that within twenty-four hours all that was signified thereby was to be realised in Him; enter into the interior of that soul, and see the dispositions of obedience and love that burned in it, offering Himself willingly to His Eternal Father for the Redemption of the human race; gather up the tears that fall from His eyes, and accompany them with thine own on seeing thy Saviour offer Himself for thee; and offer thyself with great earnestness to die for His love and to suffer all that He sees to be for the good of thy neighbours.

Fourth Point.—Assist at this table and see how Christ divides and distributes that lamb amongst the apostles and those who lived in that house; declaring by this, that all were to have part in the merits of His Passion, and were to participate in the Immaculate Lamb who was to offer Himself up on the cross. Approach thou also, with due respect and humility, and beg of the Lord to give thee some share though thou deserve it not. Say to Him with deep affection of heart: Lord, who gavest to all of the dish of this table, do not leave me alone without a share of what Thou givest to the others; if Thou givest it to them as poor, who is poorer than I? if as needy, I have more wants than all the rest; if as forsaken, I have no other protector than Thee; if as orphans, Thou seest me here without father or mother; if as Thy servants, mark me as Thy slave, I wish for no other master than Thee, here I will remain until Thou hast pity on me and givest me some consolation by Thy visitation.

*TWENTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.**For the Saturday.*

ON THE DOCTRINE OF THE GOSPEL.—(MARK VI.)

The disciples being assailed by a storm one night when at sea, Christ came to them over the waters, entered into their ship, and the wind ceased ; they reached the shore, and He cured many sick persons who came to Him asking for help.

First Point.—Consider the tempest that assailed the disciples who had embarked on the sea without their Master, for when Christ is absent tempests immediately arise ; learn not to lose sight of Him, and beg of Him very fervently not to separate Himself from thee, nor to allow thee to leave His side.

Second Point.—Consider what a life of vigilance and care Christ led with regard to His disciples, and that which prelates and superiors should lead with regard to those committed to their care. See how Christ exposes Himself to the peril into which they have fallen, and how He comes to visit them in their greatest afflictions, and learn to visit and console those under thee, and also to have firm hope in the mercy of this Lord ; consider the care He has of thee, how He never forgets thee and knows where thou art and what thou art doing and the trials that surround thee, to console thee in them and to deliver thee from whatever peril thou mayest have fallen into. Rejoice to possess so good a Lord and Master, and cry out to Him in thy necessities, begging of Him to come and favour thee as He did His disciples.

Third Point.—Consider how the disciples did not at first know their Master until He came near to them and entered into their ship and spoke familiarly with them. Approach God if thou wouldst know Him, for the reason that thou dost not know Him and serve Him as thou

shouldst, is, that thou wanderest away from His presence, embarked on the sea of this world. Retire, then, from creatures, and thou wilt find the Creator; converse with Him in prayer, and thou wilt obtain light to know Him, and the spirit to love and serve Him.

Fourth Point.—Consider how, on landing, sick persons were brought to Him and all recovered their health, by only touching His garment. Consider how many times thou hast touched Him, not only His dress, but His most holy Body, and hast received Him into thy breast, and still thou art sick, for thou hast not their faith: weep over thy neglect, and beg of the Lord to cure thee, since thou hast so many infirmities; relate them all to Him one by one, and beg of Him to cure them all and to give thee His grace in order not to fall again into sin.

TWENTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

ON THE CEREMONIES OF THE PASCHAL SUPPER THAT
CHRIST CELEBRATED.—(EXOD. XIX.)

God ordered His people to eat the Paschal Lamb with unleavened bread and wild lettuces, standing, their loins girt, shoes on their feet, and staves in their hands; all of which was most faithfully executed by Christ and His disciples on that night.

First Point.—Enter into the supper-room and contemplate Christ and His disciples dressed, as aforesaid, like travellers, and ready to depart, eating that Paschal Lamb with all its ceremonies; in which they teach thee how thou shouldst live and converse in this world, behaving whilst in it like a traveller and pilgrim going to thy country, which is Heaven, and being always ready for the journey, disposed and equipped like Christ and His

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apostles : contemplate what passes there, and understand that thou hast no permanent stake on earth, nor is it thy resting-place ; do not take root or establish thyself on earth, but rather always sigh for heaven, and direct all thy steps toward it.

Second Point.—God commanded that this lamb should be eaten with wild lettuces, because it ought to be accompanied with penance and bitter contrition and grief for sins, as holy Job said (Job iii.), who before eating used to sigh and lament, accompanying his food with tears, and embittering his palate with contrition for his sins. See if thou dost the like, and whether at thy table is found mortification of the taste, and whether with thy viands thou minglest contrition of heart in such manner as to be agreeable to God, and beg of Him to give it thee, and render thee worthy to sit down with Him at His table.

Third Point.—Consider that the unleaven bread with which that lamb was eaten, as well as all the other meats of that table, signified, as St. Paul teaches (1 Cor. v.), that there should be in us no fermentation of malice, nor the mixture of sin, but only Christian truth and sincerity, for he who has not these shall not be worthy to sit at Christ's table, nor to enter His kingdom. See if this fermentation of evil is in thy heart and soul, and purify them from all dross of sin and falsehood, and try with the sincerity that God asks of His followers to become worthy to sit down with Him at the table of His glory.

Fourth Point.—Consider that God ordered that those who eat this lamb should have their feet shod, in order, as St. Gregory Nazianzen declares, that they may not be hurt by the thorns and rocks of the road ; by which Christ teaches us that we should shun the occasions of sin, and prepare ourselves in time for the road in this life, in order that we may not be wounded or hurt by the thorns of vice. See how little thou advancest, and what little progress thou makest in this journey ; open thine eyes and see if thou art still in the Egypt of thy sins and the idol-

atry of earthly affections. Take heed lest the occasions in which thou findest thyself cause this through thy want of forethought in avoiding them ; arm thyself with foresight in a matter so important to thee, fly evil occasions, and hasten to travel towards heaven : see, Christ sets out ; sleep not, nor leave His company. Notice that God ordered that the lamb should be eaten in haste, to show the diligence that He requires of His disciples in all that relates to His service : take care lest He should send thee away as tepid, or leave thee on the road. It was also ordered that no part of the lamb should be left for the next day, for no one was to remain another day in Egypt, and thus thou art to consider each day as though it were the last of thy life. Meditate deeply on all this, and consider each day that dawns as thy last, on which thou mayest pass from this life to the next.

TWENTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the First Sunday of Lent.

ON THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST IN THE DESERT.

Christ retired into the desert, fasted forty days (Matt. iv.), and was tempted by Satan with gluttony, with the desire for honours, and the offer of riches, all of which temptations He overcame by His virtue, and when he had sent away the Evil One from His presence, the angels approached and ministered unto Him.

First Point.—In this battle that Christ fought against the devil, and the victory He gained over him, thou hast much to meditate. Consider, first, how the devil dared to tempt the Saviour of the world, and be not cast down if thou find thyself tempted, but rather take courage by the example of Christ, to suffer and fight until thou conquerest, begging His favour against so cunning an enemy.

See the preparations that Christ makes for the battle, withdrawing into a desert, fasting forty days with great rigour, giving Himself up to silence, mortification, and prayer, which are the arms by which the victory over the enemy is to be gained. Consider if thou makest use of them, examining them one by one, and beg them of the Lord, for without them thou canst not conquer.

Second Point.—Consider that on Christ being hungry, Satan assailed Him with a temptation to gluttony, like a captain attacking the fortress on the side where the wall seems the weakest, and if thou dost hunger after temporal goods and art weak in virtue, Satan will assail thee. Put thy hand on thy breast and see if it is weak on any point, and beg of the Lord to strengthen thee that thou mayest not be overcome. See how the devil fights with Christ, tempting Him like the first Adam with gluttony, and how Christ conquers him by confidence in God, who has given His word not to abandon in their necessities those who belong to Him; confide in His bounty that He will not leave thee in thy need, and curb thy appetites if thou wouldst overcome the enemy.

Third Point.—Consider how the devil carried Christ up to the pinnacle of the Temple and there endeavoured to persuade Him to throw Himself down to the ground, confiding with vain presumption in Divine Providence, that It would send angels to bear Him up in their hands, that He might not be hurt. Perceive the cunning of the devil, and do not let thyself be deceived by his wiles; fly like Christ with true humility from vainglory and presumption, if thou wouldst come victorious out of the struggle.

Fourth Point.—Consider that from the Temple the devil conducted Christ on to a high mountain and offered Him all the riches and honours of the world if He would adore him, which Christ despised, and having overcome the devil, angels approached and crowned Him as a victor. Contemplate here the importunity of the devil in tempting Christ, for though twice defeated he did not desist

from his purpose, and attacked Him a third time with greater fury; in order that thou shouldst be aware that he never gives himself up for vanquished, and that thou shouldst always be ready to resist him; consider besides what a strong weapon is the covetousness of temporal goods, for the devil confides in it for victory after having been defeated in the other temptations, and keep thy heart free from this affection, lest thou fall into his snares. See how Christ despised them all with such great courage, and weep over thy weakness and malice in having so many times bent thy knee to the devil for the sake of human interests of no value. See how the devil fled immediately, for he flies from those who conquer him; resist him with courage, and he will fly from thee. Lastly, approach with the angels and congratulate Christ on His victory; rejoice to see thy Captain crowned; be glad of His triumph, and learn to conquer if thou wouldst obtain the crown that the Saviour won.

TWENTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

ON WHAT OCCURRED DURING THE SUPPER OF THE
PASCHAL LAMB.

First Point.—Consider that, as St. Bonaventure says, the most Holy Virgin, with St. Mary Magdalen and other pious women, followed the Saviour and went up from Bethania to Jerusalem, and going to the same house celebrated the Pasch in His company, though at different tables, according to the custom of the Hebrews; and that they prepared all that was to be placed on the table. Contemplate their love for Christ, which did not allow them to separate themselves one instant from His side; weep over the little thou hast, since thou so easily lovest

sight of Him and leavest His holy company. See the Queen of Heaven occupied with those holy women in domestic cares, and the affection and devotion with which they served Christ and His apostles, and learn that which thou shouldst have in all things that relate to His service.

Second Point.—Consider that, as St. Justin¹ says, it was the custom to roast the lamb in the form of a cross, run through the shoulders with a skewer in order to prepare it better; and contemplate the grief that would pierce the heart of the most Holy Virgin, on seeing in that mirror her most precious Son stretched out on the cross that was so soon to await Him, although she would hide her sorrow in order not to afflict those holy women. Enter into that supper-room and console, as best thou canst, the most Holy Virgin, compassionate her grief, and see thyself in that mirror, and offer thyself to her service.

Third Point.—Consider what Metaphrastes² says, that Christ sent from the table a plate of that lamb to His most Holy Mother and the devout women, in order that they might celebrate the Pasch with Him; see the devotion with which she would receive that present and would divide it with that holy company, and the thanks that she would render to her most Holy Son; approach the table, place thyself in the presence of that most merciful Virgin as children do in that of their mother, that she may give thee a mouthful with her own hand; beg it of her with thine eyes and thy heart, rather than with thy lips, confiding most firmly in her immense charity that she will exercise it in thy behalf, and see what gratitude thou owest her for this mercy.

Fourth Point.—Consider that the law ordered the Jews not to break the bones, but to disjoint them all one by one, in which it teaches us that we should meditate, as St. Bonaventure explains, all the mysteries of Christ and

¹ D. Jus. in dial. cum Triphone.

² Metaph. ord. de vita Deip.

of His Sacred Passion, without omitting a single one ; establish this devotion in thy soul, and purpose in His presence to consider and ponder them all, compassionating the Lord ; accompanying His footsteps, and watering with thy tears the road that He waters with His blood.

TWENTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE LAST JUDGMENT.—(MATT. XXV.)

Christ says that He will come to judge the world with great majesty, and that He will put the good on His right hand and the wicked on His left, that He will examine the case of each one and give a final sentence, calling the good to heaven, and precipitating the wicked into hell.

First Point.—Consider that there will be a day of reckoning, on which God will ask an account of their lives from all men, and from thee also as one of them. Consider what account thou couldst give if He asked it of thee now ; and how thou wouldst wish to give it then before that court of heaven and earth, of angels and of men, which will be on the watch to hear the accusations brought against thee and thy defence ; and thou awaiting the final sentence to which there is no reply, and from which there will never be appeal or reprieve, and do now what thou wouldst wish to have done then, without further delaying thy amendment, for there is nothing certain in this life.

Second Point.—Consider the majesty with which the Saviour will come, accompanied by His angels and all the celestial court, and how He will fix His tribunal on an elevated spot, and how all nations will congregate there to give an account of their lives, accompanied only

by their works, without riches or relations, servants, or friends ; rest thine eyes on the good, so happy and joyful, and then on the wicked, so sorrowful and unhappy ; all their possessions lost, and weeping bitterly their misfortune, without power to remedy it ; ponder how the drama of their life passed like a dream, and now the true life begins for them ; and see to which of these two societies thou wouldst belong, for thou must inevitably be of the one or the other ; and dispose thy life so as to belong to that of the good and predestined, and not to that of the wicked and condemned for ever.

Third Point.—Consider what Christ says, that on His coming He will separate the good from the wicked, as the shepherd separates the lambs from the goats ; and as St. Paul says, the good will rise up resplendent into the air, and will place themselves on the right hand of Christ, and the wicked will remain on the earth at His left hand as reprobates. Present thyself at that place, now by consideration, and watch attentively what passes, consider the joy of the former and the envy of the latter : what the son will feel on seeing his father ascend and himself remain condemned, the wife her husband, the sister her brother, and the friend his friend. Contemplate the weeping and rage they will give way to for not being able to follow them, and cry out to God with all thy heart, begging of Him His grace to attain the lot of the blessed, and not to fall into that most miserable fate of the reprobate.

Fourth Point.—Lay great stress on the considerations of that sentence which will be given to each band,—to the good, calling them to reign in His company in heaven, because they used mercy towards Him, when they exercised it towards His poor ; and to the wicked, precipitating them with the devils into hell to suffer eternally because they did not do so. Think much on the glory of the former and the misery of the latter, and above all on its duration, which will not be for ten or twenty years, as the banishments here, but for as long as God is God,

for an eternity without end or term or diminution, for there will be always more and more for the good to enjoy and the wicked to suffer. Explore this bottomless abyss, this road without an end, and turn to God with deep admiration, and say, O Lord, this being true, how can any one offend Thee! Mortals are mad not to consider this, and mad I have always been not to have thought of it; give me Thy grace that I may return to my senses, and never cease serving Thee, loving Thee, and glorifying Thee without end, so as to deserve to live eternally with Thee in heaven.

TWENTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

ON THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT FIGURED BY THE
PASCHAL LAMB.

First Point.—Consider that Christ our Lord is that Immaculate Lamb who takes away the sins of the world, and who by His most precious blood redeemed us from the captivity of Egypt, in which we were by our sins; and that as God ordered the Israelites on their leaving Egypt to eat of that lamb so that they might have courage and strength to abandon Egypt and its idolatry, in like manner, and with still higher intent, the Lord ordered that His faithful servants should receive the Immaculate and sacramental Lamb in which He gives them grace to abandon the Egypt of vice and the idolatry of sin. It was eaten roasted, to signify the fire of love that the Saviour had for us, and with which He prepared for us this Divine food. Give Him many thanks for so incomparable a mercy, and invite all creatures to help thee in so doing, and reflect how many times thou hast received the Lamb, and whether thou hast gone out of Egypt or art still in thy idolatries and sins, and dispose

thyself to leave them by the grace that it communicates to thee.

Second Point.—Consider that God ordered the Jews to eat the lamb with their loins girt to signify the girdle of chastity with which we should approach to receive the Immaculate Lamb at the table of the altar ; and with unleaven bread, because, as St. Paul says (1 Cor. v.), no one should draw near with the sour leaven of sin, but with a conscience pure and free from all stain ; and with shoes on their feet, for he who eats this Lamb should be far from all occasions of falling, and guarded from all sin. Lay thy hand on thy heart, and consider whether thy conscience be clean, and whether thou art resolved never more to sin, and to withdraw from whatever might separate thee from God our Lord.

Third Point.—God ordered that this Lamb should be eaten with wild lettuces, because if we would eat this Lamb with the bitterness of penance, mortification, and contrition of sins, we should not come, as St. Jerome says, from delights to delights, and from the feasts of the world to those of God ; but from penance and the mortification of the flesh, from fasting and the hair shirt, the discipline and vigils, silence and prayer. These preparations should precede in the soul the banquet of the Lamb, and with these wild lettuces this food should be eaten ; therefore meditate in thy heart whether thou makest use of them, and dispose thyself by them to receive it as thou shouldst.

Fourth Point.—Consider that God ordered the Israelites to assist at the Paschal table with their staves in their hands, which were figures of the cross of Christ, for as the apostle St. Paul teaches, whenever we approach that table we renew the memory of His Passion ; this thou shouldst keep before thy mind and meditate, in order to receive worthily the Immaculate Lamb, who offers Himself for the salvation of the world, and for thine in particular. Enter into thyself and take the staff of thy cross, imitate Him hanging upon it, pouring out His

precious Blood and offering Himself for thy salvation to the Eternal Father,—for this He does for thee now mystically on the altar,—and break out into acts of gratitude for so incomparable a mercy, and of love for Him who so loves thee, of compassion for what He suffers, and of imitation, offering thy soul and life in sacrifice as He offers Himself for thee.

THIRTIETH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE DOCTRINE OF THE GOSPEL.—(MATT. XXI.)

The Gospel tells us that Christ entered into the Temple amidst applause and praises, that He chased from thence, with great authority, those who profaned it; that He was envied by the priests, and that leaving them He returned to Bethania.

First Point.—Consider the honour that virtue brings with it, and how it is applauded not only by God but also by men, as is seen in Christ our Lord; conceive fresh esteem for the good, uniting thyself always with them: rejoice at seeing Christ applauded, and join thyself to those who bless Him, crying out with them, Blessed is the Lord and the Saviour who brings us salvation in the name of God. O Saviour of the world! Son of David! O liberator of slaves! O Redeemer of captives! leave me not in prison, have mercy on me, and let my soul feel the effects of Thy redemption.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ did not make use of this applause for His own glory, but to increase that of God, seeking His honour and glory when He cured the sick who were brought to Him on this occasion. Learn not to be proud when thou art praised, nor to take occasion of the approbation of men to become arro-

gant and despise others, but rather endeavour to humble thyself and to do good to all, according to thy Saviour's example.

Third Point.—See Christ, seized with holy zeal for His eternal Father's glory, entering the Temple, and, though gentleness itself, making use of severity towards those who profane it by buying and selling and making of the house of prayer a house of traffic. Learn thou from Christ's zeal to be also zealous for His honour and glory, and entering into thyself purify thy heart from all vain and worldly occupations which profane it and allow it not to devote itself entirely to God our Lord.

Fourth Point.—Consider the envy and the obstinacy of the Pharisees who opposed themselves to what Christ did, and how He left them and went to Bethania, which is interpreted the house of obedience, and do not trouble thyself if, in thy good works, thou findest obstinate enemies, but follow Christ's example and persevere in the good thou hast begun, carrying on to the end the works of God, and pray Him not to go away and leave thee as He did the Pharisees in punishment of their sins.

THIRTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

ON WHAT CHRIST DID AFTER THE PASCHAL SUPPER.
(JOHN XIII.)

First Point.—The evangelist St. John says that Jesus, knowing that the time was come when He was to pass from this world to His Father, though He had always loved His disciples, yet it was at the end that He gave them the greatest proofs of His love. In which thou shouldst consider first how Christ always loved His own, and always loved thee, not at times nor with interrup-

tions, but always; and thou also shouldst love Him always, without for one moment neglecting His service. Turn thine eyes on thyself, and see how many times thou hast neglected His love and hast forgotten Him who has thee written on His heart without ever forgetting thee, and exclaim from thy innermost soul, "O my most loving God! who would not rather forget himself than Thee? O my Lord and Master, I grieve from my heart for the time in which I loved Thee not; do not consider who I am, but give me in Thy goodness one spark from the volcano of Thy breast to kindle in mine Thy love in such manner that henceforth, even if it would, it may not be able to forget Thee or to leave off loving Thee."

Second Point.—Consider how the Saviour, knowing that His hour approached, shortened the stages of His Passion, and accumulated its mysteries, working many and great things for the service of God and the good of mankind. Behold, O my soul! the time is also drawing near for thee to leave this world to go to the eternal Father, how art thou so idle and negligent? Take heed of what thou shouldst do, and that it is time to make haste and labour with fervour and diligence, doubling thy tasks and thy acts of charity towards God and men in imitation of the Saviour.

Third Point.—The evangelist says that Christ concluded the legal supper of the lamb, and got up from table. The law did not regard Him, but He gave us the example of fulfilling, in the first place, the laws that are laid down for us: this thou shouldst establish in thy soul, according to His example, as David established it (Ps. xxxvii.), when he says that he wrote the law of God in the centre of his heart. This is the first devotion that thou shouldst engrave on thy heart, and put it before all other devotions, and beg of God grace to accomplish it as thou art bound to do.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the old law was there terminated, and the new law of Christ our Lord begun; give Him thanks for the grace that He granted us at

such cost to Himself, and meditate how thou shouldst observe all that He has taught, and how thou hast observed it till now. Remember what happened to Moses (Exod. xxxii.), when he saw the idolatry of the people, how he broke the table of the law of God, depriving them of it as unworthy to receive it, on account of their perfidy. Tremble at the punishments of God ; own that thou hast sinned against His holy law,—that thou art unworthy of it. Humble thyself in His presence, and beg of Him, with anguish of heart, not to punish thee as thou meritest, by depriving thee of His law, but to pardon thee, and give thee His grace to begin anew to serve Him and to deserve to be one of His chosen ones, who keep it perfectly, without neglecting one iota, as Christ Himself kept it.

THIRTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE DOCTRINE OF THE GOSPEL.—(MATT. XII.)

The Scribes and Pharisees approached Christ and asked miracles of Him, and He answering indicated to them that of His resurrection, and compared their obstinacy with the penance that the Ninivites did at the prediction of the Prophet Jonas, and with the fervour of the Queen of Saba, who came from the East to listen to the wisdom of King Solomon.

First Point.—Consider how all those who approach Christ do not profit equally, because they do not all go with the same intention and desire for their own good ; consider to which class thou belongest, and see if thou requirest miracles like these Pharisees to determine thee to follow Christ. Consider how long thou hast assisted at His school, and what advantage thou hast drawn from

it, and beg His grace to amend and profit by His holy doctrine.

Second Point.—Consider how, when the Pharisees asked Christ for miracles, He indicated to them that of His resurrection, by which He was to return into the world after three days; consider that thou also art to arise again from the dead; but see how thou wilt rise, whether glorious like Christ, or hideous and abominable like sinners, who have not done penance. Dispose thy life so as to be His companion in heaven.

Third Point.—Lay the stress of thy consideration on the sentence that Christ passed on the Pharisees, saying, that the Ninivites would condemn them on the day of judgment, because, profiting by the prediction of Jonas the prophet, they did penance; whereas the Jews who had Christ, much greater than Jonas and all the prophets, preach to them, did not do so. Consider that thou hast the same teaching, for it is His gospel that is preached to thee; and though from a different mouth, it is the same doctrine that He taught the ancients, and that He will make the same charge against thee as against them, and will put thee in the balance with those of Ninive, who did bitter penance at the word of Jonas, and thou dost not do it at that of thy Saviour. See that thou be not condemned in this comparison like the Pharisees. Put before thine eyes the city of Ninive, the tears, the fasting, the sackcloth and ashes, and all crying out to the Lord, from the king down to the vilest slave, and that having been granted forty days' reprieve, they did not wait so long, but did penance at once; and see what penance thou wouldst make, who hast not one day certain, and cry out with the Ninivites to God begging pardon for thy sins, and offering Him, with true contrition, to do suitable penance for them.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ puts before their eyes the Queen of Saba coming from so great a distance to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, and that they having so near to them Him who is greater than Solomon, do

not profit by His wisdom and doctrine. Consider that Christ will make the same charge against thee for thy negligence ; see how men labour and travel to acquire human knowledge and perishable honours and riches, and the little that thou dost to obtain the wisdom of heaven and true honours and riches. Listen to the many preachers and spiritual masters that the Lord has sent thee, and whom thou hast so near at hand, that whenever thou desirest thou canst profit by their teaching, and thou dost not do so ; tremble lest thou be put in the balance with those who have become saints by making use of these means ; see how many there are in thine own town who have not the food of doctrine that thou despisest, and the account that thou wilt have to give to God for it, and beg His grace to mend and to live with such fervour that no one may be able to outdo thee, and that thou mayest outstrip all in His holy service.

THIRTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

CONTINUATION OF WHAT CHRIST DID AFTER THE PASCHAL SUPPER.—(JOHN XIII.)

First Point.—St. John says that Jesus, knowing that His hour was come when He was to pass from this world to his Father, showed still greater proofs of the delicacy of His love for man. Consider with St. Cyril that the evangelist repeats twice that Christ knew and was aware that His Passion and death were at hand, in order that we should see how voluntarily He suffered for our love, and that He suffered and died *sciens et volens*—knowingly and willingly, not by the force or strength of His enemies, but by His only will ; for being able, He would not reject any one of His torments. O Lord, how much

do I owe Thee, since Thou didst suffer with such willingness for my love ! Give me Thy grace to suffer for Thine, and not to reject any martyrdom, pain, or affront in Thy service.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ, knowing His hour, did not put off labouring until it should come, but beforehand worked great things in the service of God and for the glory of His Eternal Father, in order that thou, who dost not know thine, mayest not put off till later thy improvement, but mayest at once prepare thyself with works of sanctity and penance before it shall come ; remember that the hour is certain to arrive, but the when is most uncertain, and weep over the neglect of thy advancement in which thou livest, and begin at once to serve God with fervour and to heap immortal riches for that hour, with which to live eternally.

Third Point.—The Evangelist says that the Saviour, knowing that His Father had left all things in His hands, arose from table and threw Himself at the feet of His disciples, which was, as it were, putting all things under their feet, to teach them to despise and trample on them. Consider on the one hand the wisdom of the Saviour, and on the other this action, and the call that He gives thee to despise all earthly things, and trample on them for His love. Take the advice of St. Augustin, and leave thy riches before they leave thee ; make, as they say, a virtue of necessity ; see how Christ clings not to them, and do thou throw them aside for His love.

Fourth Point.—Consider how, as the Evangelist says, the devil having entered into the heart of Judas Iscariot, that he should sell his Master, Christ our Lord got up from the supper in haste, and began to work many mysteries : in which thou must ponder the sanctity of the Evangelist, for the sin of Judas being so grievous and so notorious, he yet found excuse for him, throwing the blame on the devil who deceived him. Learn not to speak evil against thy brethren, but rather to excuse their faults however grievous they may be, gilding them with

charity ; contemplate, moreover, the fervour of Christ, who considered it disgraceful to be surpassed by His enemies, and that they should be more diligent in inflicting death on Him than He in receiving it, and by it giving them life. And thus He outdid Judas, giving beforehand so many graces to him who was only seeking to betray Him to His enemies. O Lord ! O Divine Master ! who would not desire to be all on fire with the fervour of Thy love in order to imitate Thee ! Blessed be Thou, who so truly lovest me, and hast so forestalled me with mercies, and hast redeemed me at Thy so great cost. I give Thee a thousand thanks for so great a mercy, and I beg of Thee to give me strength and fervour to serve Thee diligently, even unto giving my life for Thy love.

THIRTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE WOMAN OF CANAAN.—(MATT. XV.)

A woman of Canaan was crying out after Christ, begging of Him the cure of her daughter who was possessed. Christ did not hear her, but the disciples, and still more her humility, her faith, and her perseverance, interceding for her, Christ granted health to her daughter from that hour.

First Point.—See this woman of Canaan belonging to the most despised of all races amongst the Hebrews, who by her faith and virtue obtained from Christ the health she asked for her daughter, for he who is of better blood is not the greatest in the eyes of God, but he who is more virtuous ; nor is the Lord an acceptor of persons, but of works, appreciating and esteeming each one according to his acts ; rejoice to have so righteous a Lord, and one so just in His judgments, and see what merit thou hast in His eyes—what are thy works ? How

many there are, despised and poor in the eyes of men, who are high in God's esteem, because their works merit it, and, on the other hand, how many are there who are esteemed by men and despised by God for their vices and sins. O Lord, how righteous are Thy judgments! give me Thy grace to esteem what deserves approbation, and to appreciate each thing according to its true value.

Second Point.—Consider the perseverance of this woman, who, though at first she was not heard by our Lord, and afterwards received from Him a severe answer, still remained firm in her faith and petition, crying out and persevering at the Saviour's door. Learn to persevere in prayer and not to desist in thy petitions, even if thou feel dryness and aversion, and God seem deaf to thy prayers; weep, lament, and cry aloud at His door with perseverance like this woman, and be confident that thou wilt obtain, as she did, a favourable answer to thy request.

Third Point.—Consider how the apostles, hearing her cries and seeing that she kept on following Christ, interceded for her, begging of Him to hear her and to have mercy on her. In which thou must learn two things: 1st, to intercede with the powerful for the poor and afflicted in their necessities; 2dly, to try and obtain mediators with God, gaining the good-will of the saints by services and good works, in order that they may intercede for thee and obtain from His Divine Majesty what thou beggest of Him; see how beneficial the intercession of the apostles was to this woman; and from this thou shouldst conclude how important is to thee the intercession with God of these same apostles and of the other saints; pray them, then, to accompany thee to His tribunal and present there thy petitions and favour thy intentions, and since they prayed for this woman of Canaan without her asking it of them, with greater reason will they intercede for thee, if thou ask it of them with humility and devotion.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ delivered the

daughter from the devil that possessed her on account of the faith and the prayer of her mother ; what happiness must it not have been for both of them, what rejoicing and jubilee in all their household ; and contemplate the joy of a soul and of all the celestial court when it escapes from the slavery of the devil who held it in the chains of sins ; cease not to pray God for all sinners, and, if thou art the head of a family, for all those who are confided to thy care, and even if thou wert more sternly rejected than this woman of Canaan, thy petitions will be favourably heard, if thou have a lively faith like hers : beg it of the Lord, and also that He may give thee His grace to know how to ask and to persevere in His service.

THIRTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

HOW CHRIST WASHED THE FEET OF HIS DISCIPLES.
(JOHN XIII.)

The supper being ended the Redeemer arose, laid aside His garments, girded Himself with a towel, poured water into a basin and began to wash the feet of His disciples.

First Point.—Enter by contemplation into the supper-room, and apply all thy senses to what is there taking place : see the Son of the Eternal Father, girded in the form of a servant, kneeling on the ground and washing the feet of His disciples, who are seated by His command ; notice the modesty that characterises them, the silence they keep, and the admiration of their hearts, seeing their Master and Lord prostrate at their feet, the obedience and submission with which they allow themselves to be washed, and Christ performing that humble office with great recollection and devotion ; and, with the disciples,

admire His profound humility, and the greater thou art, humble thyself the more to imitate thy Lord.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ put aside His garments to serve His disciples, others take them from their followers to be served; see how He girds Himself to perform with greater promptitude this office, and how with His own hands He pours water into the pitcher, without the assistance of ministers, as in the wedding of Cana, and from the pitcher into the basin, which St. Bonaventure says was of stone; and being present in spirit, offer Him thy service; beg of Him at least to allow thee to fill and empty the basin, and alleviate Him in His labour by that humble service. Lift thine eyes up to heaven and see the angels in admiration of such profound humility, going and offering themselves to help and serve Him. Enter thou also with them, and beg of Him to give thee some share in a work so heroic and of such great merit.

Third Point.—Consider, with St. Chrysostom, that Christ began this washing with Judas as the one most in need of all, and taking great pains to honour the man who took such pains to offend Him. Contemplate Christ prostrate at the feet of Judas, taking in His blessed hands those feet that had made so many steps to betray Him: He washed them once and again, not only with water, but with the tears that flowed from His eyes, through the grief He felt at his perdition; and perhaps He even lifted His eyes to look at him, and yet nothing softened that heart. Oh hardness of the obstinate sinner when he gives Satan the entry into his heart! St. Bonaventure says,¹ that Christ not only washed their feet, but that He also kissed them. Contemplate Christ our Redeemer press His lips on the feet of Judas, as one who kisses the instrument of his death. O my Redeemer, how didst Thou draw Thy lips so close to such an unclean sinner? That mouth which is the fountain of wisdom, from which heaven and earth are

¹ St. Bonav. Med. xxxvii. De Vita Cristi.

taught, thou approachest to this quagmire of sins? What is this, O Lord? How do the heavens permit it? How is it that Thy Eternal Father does not prevent it? But I see that Thou appliest Thy mouth to the most dreadful wound to cure it; place my heart in that basin and wash me from the stains of my sins, for I am in greater need even than Judas.

Fourth Point.—Consider, with St. Ambrose, that Christ, whilst washing and cleansing His disciples' feet, did not wash His own, not only because He did not require that cleansing, but also because, as the Saint says, we are to wash them for Him, not with material water, but with our tears. Throw thyself at His feet, with St. Mary Magdalen, and pouring forth floods of tears from thine eyes, wash them with extreme humility, and clean them with the flesh of thy heart, and press them to thy lips, be silent, weep, love, and offer thy soul and thy life to follow His footsteps all thy days, as did that holy sinner; arise not from His feet until thou hast heard from His mouth, as she did, that thy sins are forgiven thee, and that thy soul will be saved.

THIRTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE SICK MAN THAT CHRIST CURED AT THE PROBATICA.
(JOHN V.)

Christ went up to Jerusalem on a feast day, and entered into the hospital which was near the Temple. He fixed His eyes on the most necessitous among the sick, offering him health, which He gave him by a single word, ordering him to take up his bed and go into his house, and He was at once obeyed.

First Point.—Consider how Christ spent the feast-

days, and what were His occupations at such times ; namely, frequenting the holy Temple, visiting the hospitals, and curing the sick ; from which thou shouldst learn in what manner thou shouldst spend feasts according to His example ; beg of Him grace and favour to accompany Him, and to follow His footsteps, celebrating the days dedicated to God by works of His service.

Second Point.—Enter by consideration into that hospital, and cast a glance over the various sick persons that are there, and thou wilt see a portrait of the world, full of as many sick persons as there are sinners on the earth, with such different infirmities, some with avarice, others with ambition, others with anger, others with gluttony, and others with lust, and with the infirmities of many other vices ; and grieve for them, and beg of the Lord to send them doctors and spiritual medicines to cure them and to restore them to health, and turn thine eyes on thyself and see thyself amongst them, wounded and sick with the contagion of vices, and weep over the number of years that thou hast been ill, and cry out to the Lord for health.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ cast His eyes on the sick man who was in the greatest need, and the one most abandoned, and gave him complete health. Learn thou also to look out for the poorest and most neglected by the world, and to use all thine efforts to procure health for them ; and turn to the heavenly doctor, and say to Him, Lord, if Thou seekest the most needy amongst the sick, I am the poorest and most neglected, I have no one to stand by me, give me Thy hand, and do Thou stand by me ; and as Thou hast health enough not only for one like the Probatika, but for many and for all the sick, that have been or ever will be in the world, grant me the cure of all my infirmities and grace to arise from the deadly sickness of my sins.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ ordered this sick man to take up his bed and go out of the hospital, in proof of his perfect health, to teach us to recover it in

our souls by leaving the occasions of sin, which are the bed of vice. Consider as spoken to thyself the words of Christ our Lord; and as He commands thee to remove the occasions of sin, beg of Him to give thee strength, as He did to this sick man, to remove them and to serve Him perfectly all the days of thy life; listen to and meditate on those last words from the mouth of the Saviour, "Behold, thou art made whole; sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee."

THIRTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

ON WHAT OCCURRED BETWEEN CHRIST AND ST. PETER
DURING THE WASHING OF THE FEET.

First Point.—Christ came to wash the feet of St. Peter, who, full of astonishment, said, "Lord, dost Thou wash my feet? Thou shalt never wash my feet." Ponder over all these words springing from the lively faith and knowledge that St. Peter had of the divinity of the Saviour: *Domine*, Lord, who rulest heaven and earth, to whom angels and men do homage, and whom all creatures obey: *tu*, Thou, who art Son of the living God, Word of the Father, so noble, so wise, so powerful, and in all things equal to Him: *mihi*, to me, who am a vile worm, a dunghill, and sink of vices: *lavas*, thou wastest, an office so humble and lowly, when, if Thou wert only to deign to look at me, it were a great mercy, how much more to wash me, who am so full of stains from the mire of my sins: *pedes*, my feet, which is the lowest and most vile part of the body, kneeling at my feet, taking them in Thy hands, touching and cleansing the filth of my uncleanness; I can never permit it, as far as in me lies. Take these words of St. Peter, and, considering the

mercies that God confers on thee each day, address them to the Lord, learning from them who He is, and who those art, and how unworthy of His graces, and humble thyself profoundly in His presence.

Second Point.—Consider what the Saviour said to St. Peter, “If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part with Me.” Which is understood of the water of grace, with which Christ cleanses our souls by the means of the holy sacraments of baptism and penance. Learn not to resist Christ, nor thy prelates and masters who hold His place, by opposing what they order, but rather learn to obey them, answering with humility, obedience, and complete submission, as thou shouldst do, in all that concerns God, so as not to lose His grace, and at the same time learn to wash the stains of thy sins with penance and contrition, in order to have part with Him.

Third Point.—Consider the answer of St. Peter to the Saviour: Lord, if it be so, not my feet only, but wash me from head to foot; in which he shows how firm he was in the love of Christ, and how much he desired to be always at His side and to live and die with Him, since he offers not only his feet, but also his hands and his head. O my soul, if thou knewest how to offer to God thy feet, thy hands, and thy head, that He might cleanse thee completely, that is, thy desires, thy works, and thy thoughts; thy intelligence, thy will, and thy hands, which are thy exterior actions! Turn to God and beg of Him to purify with the water of His grace thy head, that thy thoughts may be always holy and thy intentions righteous, seeking and desiring in all things His service and greater glory; thy will, that thou mayest never love or desire anything but Himself; and thy hands, in order that all thy works may be holy and for His service, without stain or imperfection.

Fourth Point.—Consider the words of Christ in reply to St. Peter: “He that is washed needeth not but to wash his feet, but is clean wholly. And you are clean, but not all.” Which He said of Judas who was to betray

Him. Ponder very slowly, how capable that washing was of cleansing any soul of its sins, however grievous they might be, since Christ performed it with His own hands, and nevertheless one remained in his sins. Oh, lamentable hardness of heart ! Oh, how many approach the cleansing sacrament of penance and remain in sin through their own malice ! See that thou be not one of those, and so unlucky as to remain stained amongst so many who are purified. Ruminates on that sentence : " He that is washed," that is by baptism, as St. Augustin teaches, " needeth not but to wash his feet," which are the affections and the will, to shake off the dust of imperfections, which, as St. Bernard says, sticks to the feet from the earth on which they walk, and these imperfections and venial sins it is important also to purge away, in order to have part with Christ in heaven, into which no mote of imperfection is admitted. O Lord, and who shall be worthy to have part with Thee, if Thou Thyself dost not purify and cleanse him ? Wash me, Lord, from my sins and from the least blemish of imperfection, that I may be worthy to have part with Thee.

THIRTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD.

Christ retired with three of His disciples into a mountain, and there was transfigured before them ; Moses and Elias were with Him talking of His Passion, a bright cloud overshadowed Him, and the voice of the Father was heard confessing Him to be His Son ; the disciples were afraid, and Christ ordered them to keep secret what they had seen, until He should be risen from the dead.

First Point.—Consider how Christ retired with His disciples to the solitude of a mountain, to show them the glory of His transfiguration, for He does not reveal His secret mysteries to any but those who retire from the bustle of men and of secular business into solitude and quiet of heart. Learn to withdraw from all that is earthly if thou wouldst enjoy with Christ that which is Divine and heavenly.

Second Point.—The sacred Evangelist says that whilst praying He was transfigured, and His face became resplendent like the sun and His garments white as snow ; in which thou hast to learn the virtue of prayer and to devote thyself to it, because by converse with God man is changed from a sinner to a saint, and from carnal to spiritual : he becomes resplendent with the light of good example and obtains purity and simplicity of soul. Oh, if thou knewest how to break with all that is earthly, and to give thyself up to prayer and converse with God ! In this manner the face of Moses became resplendent, and thine will become the same, if thou knowest how to pray with proper devotion and love ; lift up thy heart to God our Lord and say to Him : Give me this grace, O my God, that, abandoning the conversations of men, I may give myself up entirely to converse with Thee and obtain thereby the graces that Thou grantest to those that pray worthily.

Third Point.—Consider how out of twelve apostles and seventy-two disciples, to three only does Christ manifest His transfiguration, because the chosen ones and those who serve God perfectly are always few. See whether thou *art* of the few or of the many, whether thou meritest to receive especial favour from God ; endeavour to purify thy soul and to tend towards perfection, in order to deserve to be of the chosen and favoured ones of the Lord.

Fourth Point.—Consider the reason why Christ transfigured Himself on this occasion, which was, as the Evangelist says, because, having foretold His Passion, He

then showed them His glory, that their faith might not be weakened, and that seeing Him die, they might not think Him a mere man. See how important faith is, for it is the foundation of all sanctity, and how much the Lord desires that it should take deep root in our hearts, when for that purpose He makes use of such high means ; and that we may not waver in it, He does not hesitate to open the heavens and exhibit its treasures. Beg of God to grant thee grace to grow each day in His holy faith, and to give thee His light to root thyself in it more and more.

THIRTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

ON WHAT CHRIST SAID TO HIS APOSTLES AFTER THE
WASHING OF THE FEET.

First Point.—Consider how Christ our Lord, having concluded the humble office of washing the feet of His disciples, reassumed His garments, sat down again in their midst, and began to give them holy advice, declaring to them the reason why He had washed their feet. Here, O my soul ! thou hast a Master to teach thee the road to salvation and perfection ; see with what earnestness He applied Himself to teach thee, and do thou apply thyself with like earnestness to learn the doctrine : enter into that supper-room and listen to His words and see His example, ruminate and repass over and over again the lesson that He gives thee, that it may remain better impressed on thy heart.

Second Point.—Consider the first words that the Saviour spoke, which were : “ Know ye what I have done to you ? ” in which He declares that not every one penetrates the mysteries contained in His life, but only

those to whom His Divine Majesty deigns to make them known. O Lord ! speak to my heart, and give me light that I may understand and penetrate the deep meaning of the works, words, and actions of Thy life, in order that I may direct mine to Thy service, and may not lose, by my ignorance, what is so important to me.

Third Point.—Consider the remainder of that lesson, “You call me Master and Lord ; and you do well, for so I am : if then, I, being your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.” Meditate on each word, and pay attention to the feeling and gravity with which the Saviour says them, “You call me Lord and Master ;” reflect that it is not sufficient to confess Him with thy lips, if thou dost not do so with thy works, for He who calls me Lord, will not be one of the elect, nor one of my flock, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven ; nor he who calls me Master and listens to my doctrine, but he who puts it in practice. Lay thy hand on thy heart and see if thou practise it, and how many years thou hast been at this school, and how much thou hast improved thyself in it. Take heed lest thou shouldst be dismissed as useless and ill-disposed, because thou bringest discredit on His house ; go on to meditate these words ! “And you say well, for so I am.” Christ is thy Master ; seek no other, or thou wilt be lost. O King of Glory ! O Lord and Master of Heaven ! Thou art also mine, and I will have no other than Thee, nor do Thou allow me ever to have any other.

Fourth Point.—Consider, lastly, those words of the Saviour, “I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also,” which are not to be limited to this one action of washing the feet, but are to be extended to all the life of Christ our Lord, which was a pattern of good works for all men, and a guide that we might not mistake the road to salvation. Put before thine eyes this mirror, and consider thyself in it attentively, correct thy faults, adorn thy soul, and con-

sider one by one the works of Christ, how thou hast imitated them until now, and how thou shouldst imitate them in future, and especially His profound humility, abasing thyself at the feet of all to imitate thy Saviour and follow the example that He gave us by prostrating Himself at those of His disciples. This is the road that conducts men to life, and by which Thou must travel if thou wouldst reach heaven.

FORTIETH MEDITATION.

For the Second Sunday of Lent.

ON THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD.

First Point.—Go up in spirit to Mount Thabor in the company of Christ and of His beloved disciples, and contemplate what passes there. See how, in the solitude of night, they all four begin to pray in profound silence, and how the face of Christ becomes resplendent like the sun, and His garments seem whiter than snow ; music is heard from heaven ; a bright cloud overshadows them together with Moses and Elias, who appear there with majesty ; a voice is heard from the Father, and the hearts of the disciples are inundated with immense delight. Apply thy senses to all that passes there, see the glory of Christ, hear what Moses and Elias say ; what St. Peter says when he begs that they may remain there, and above all, the voice of the Father, Who says, “ This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” and rejoice at His joy, and congratulate Him a thousand times on His glory.

Second Point.—Consider the recompense that God has prepared for those who serve Him, and how great it must be, since St. Peter, with the one glimpse of it which the Saviour gave him, was disgusted with all that the world possesses, and wished to leave it all and never to

return to it again, for all it can offer is as nothing, and its joys as bitter aloes, when compared with an eternal recompense. O Lord! how deceived have I been, sighing after the crumbs of this world! Grant me to know and appreciate the rewards of Thy elect, that I may leave and despise all the rest for Thee.

Third Point.—Consider the conversation that took place on that mountain, and in the midst of that glory, namely, on the Passion and death that Christ was to suffer at Jerusalem. Consider that there is no subject more delightful to the Saviour than that of His Passion and death, since He took pleasure in speaking of it in the midst of His greatest glory, and beg of Him grace to meditate on it, and never to dismiss it from thy mind, and to delight in suffering for His love, as He rejoiced to suffer for thee.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the Evangelist says that the disciples, hearing the voice of the Father, were afraid and fell to the ground, trembling and prostrate with fear, so great an effect the voice of the most high Lord has on the weakness of man. Reflect, then, that if a voice so sweet and mild caused them such great fear, what effect will be produced on the wicked when they hear that awful and most terrible voice condemning them to eternal torments! Place thyself on the summit of Thabor, and then in the valley of Josaphat, and compare what passes in the one place with what occurs in the other, the glory of the former with the fearful torments prepared for the wicked in the latter, and look to thyself that thou mayest not deserve to hear that terrible voice, but rather that which shall call thee to enjoy the glory of the Lord.

FORTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

ON THE INSTITUTION OF THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT.
(MATT. XXVL.)

The washing of the feet being ended, Christ sat down to supper a second time, and, giving thanks to His Father, He took the bread in His hands and gave to His disciples, saying—"Take ye and eat; this is my Body, which will be delivered for you;" and the chalice in like manner, saying—"Take and drink; this is my Blood, which will be shed for you and for all," &c.

First Point.—Consider how Christ first washed the feet of His disciples, and then gave them His most holy body in the sacrament, because we should first wash and purify ourselves before approaching to receive this divine food; His bounty and thy unworthiness; and how thou shouldst prepare thyself to receive Him worthily; and beg of the Lord to prepare thee, purifying thy soul, as He washed the feet of His disciples, and purified them from all stain.

Second Point.—Enter into the breast of Christ, and contemplate the flames of love that burn in His heart; on the one hand, He regrets from His soul to leave His disciples; and on the other, He cannot fail to obey His Father, and go to redeem them; love attracts Him, obedience compels Him, and such is the delicacy of His charity that He finds means to go and yet to remain; to obey by going to die for men, and to remain with them by uniting Himself intimately with their souls by this divine and sacramental food. O Redeemer of the world! how can I give Thee thanks for such immense love? who will grant me never to separate myself from Thee, and always to love Thee above all that can be loved.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ instituted this Divine sacrament, as a memorial of His Passion, in order

that we might always have it before us ; and think of the grief that it must have caused the hearts of the apostles to see Him mystically sacrificed and dead before He had really suffered ; and how the Saviour would offer Himself at that table to the Eternal Father for the salvation of the world. Thou hast much, my soul ! to contemplate in this point ; enter into the heart of Christ, and see what passes there, and then enter into those of the apostles, and see the admiration and astonishment that so high and unimagined a mystery must have caused them, and see how Christ divided and re-divided the bread, how He communicated Himself and gave communion to the others, arming them thus for the battle that awaited them and was so near at hand ; and thou also, though unworthy, fail not to approach that table, that He may give thee some of the crumbs that fall from it ; present thyself there, fix thine eyes on the Redeemer, cry out and sigh, contemplate and wait with perseverance, for without doubt He will have pity on thee, and will not let thee go away fasting after having fed all the rest.

Fourth Point.—Consider how amongst those who communicated at that last supper was Judas, to whom Christ gave His sacred Body as to the rest, at the very time when he was contriving in his heart the betrayal of his Master to the Scribes. O Lord ! what tongue can tell of Thy bounty, and who can know and publish what Thou art ! who ever saw such patience or such delicacy of love ! Blessed, praised, and glorified be Thou for ever and ever. Amen. See the hardness of that traitor's heart, on which no impression was made by so unheard-of a benefit, and see how in receiving this token of life death entered his soul on account of its evil dispositions. Tremble and fear lest thou shouldst fall into a like sin ; see how thou approachest this table, and how many times thou hast sold the Son of God for a less price than Judas ; beg of the Lord to pardon thee, and to hold thee in His hand, that thou mayst never approach His table unworthily, nor fall into so enormous a sin.

*FORTY-SECOND MEDITATION.**For the Monday.*

ON THE DOCTRINE OF THE GOSPEL.—(JOHN VIII.)

The Gospel contains an argument that Christ had with the Jews, to whom He said that they could not follow Him, because they were in sin in which they would die ; and concluded by saying to them : “When you shall have lifted up the Son of Man, then you shall know that I am He,” since their blindness would not allow them to do so then.

First Point.—Consider that, as Origen says, in these words, which Christ said to His enemies, “I go,” He threatened them with the greatest punishment He could give them, which was to separate Himself from them and leave them in chastisement for their hardness, because, having preached to them so many times, they did not believe in Him. Tremble lest He should inflict on thee a like chastisement, examine thy life, see how many times He has preached to thee, sometimes speaking to thee Himself interiorly and at others by His preachers, and how hard is thy heart that even now thou scarcely seemest to believe in Him, and tremble, lest He should go away and leave thee as He did the Jews on account of thy ingratitude and neglect ; cry out and detain Him, begging Him not to punish thee so rigorously ; say to Him with David, “Decline not in Thy wrath from Thy servant” (Ps. xxvi.) Do not leave me, Lord,—rather annihilate me than abandon me.

Second Point.—Consider what Christ goes on to say, that they will die in their sin, because, as when the sun goes down, everything remains in darkness, so when God withdraws Himself from a soul, it remains in the obscurity of sin and in the shadow of death. It is bad enough to live in sin, but the greatest of all misfortunes is to die

in it ; this punishment the Lord sends to those who do not receive Him when He comes to them. O my soul ! consider what a punishment is this ; and that no created evil can be compared with it ! Beg of the Lord not to punish thee with such a chastisement, by letting thee die in thy sins. See which is the one that detains thee, and extricate thyself from that chain before death arrives and finds thee thus fettered.

Third Point. — Consider what the Saviour adds, “Whither I go, you cannot come ;” not because the power was wanting to them if they would be converted, but because, as St. Augustine says, Christ was on His road to glory, where they could not go with sin in which they remained by the obstinacy of their will. O my soul ! see that this sentence falls not on thee ; arise out of thy guilt, if thou wouldst follow Christ, and enter with Him into His glory. See how important this is to thee, beg of Him to admit thee to His favour and to take thee with Him to that place where thou wilt be for ever in His society.

Fourth Point.—Christ concludes, saying that they will know Him when He shall be lifted up from the earth, which, as St. Augustine explains, He said on account of those who were to believe in Him at the time of His passion, when on seeing Him die with such great patience and conformity to the will of His Father, men recognised Him as the Son of God. Give Him a thousand thanks for this light, which, like a brilliant torch, shines from His cross. Contemplate the virtues that He there displayed, by which He declared to the world that he was the Son of God. See how many were converted by it, and turn thine eyes on thyself, and see whether thou givest testimony that thou art a child of God by grace, through thy patience, humility, meekness, charity, and conformity to the will of God in all that befalls thee. See, moreover, whether thy heart is reduced to His love and obedience by as great a number of virtues as those which He showed for thy sake on the cross, and in future try to see thyself

in that mirror and correct thy faults, giving thyself up to His will in order to become a disciple worthy of Him and of being counted amongst the sons of God.

FORTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

ON WHAT TOOK PLACE AT THE LAST SUPPER OF OUR LORD.

First Point.—Consider that, as Metaphrastes¹ says, Christ our Lord sent by St. Peter the Holy Communion to the most Blessed Virgin Mary His Mother, and to the devout women who accompanied her, all of whom were in another and retired room of the house, in order that she might enjoy on that night the singular favour He had conferred on His disciples, of which it was not just to deprive His most Holy Mother. Contemplate with what tenderness and devotion that most Blessed Lady would receive the very precious gift sent to her by her Holy Son,—what very sweet tears would flow from her eyes on seeing already established the law of the gospel which the Saviour of the world came to promulgate, and enjoying already the copious streams of the Holy Sacraments, and especially of that most Divine one by which the author of grace was given her, and she received again into her breast, under the form of a sacrament, the same Son who was born of her womb. There is no tongue capable of declaring it,—only God and she who experienced it can tell it. O most pure Virgin! I rejoice at thy joy, and I beg all creatures to rejoice with thee. I congratulate thee a thousand times; oh do not, on receiving so great a mercy, forget us, but make us worthy to receive it ourselves!

Second Point.—Consider what St. Bonaventure says,

¹ Metaphrastes apud Barrad, tit. iv. lib. i. c. 17.

namely,¹ that this house in which Christ celebrated His last supper remained consecrated as a church and dwelling-place for the apostles and disciples of the Lord, and the owner who gave it gratuitously was St. Martial, to whom Christ gave such grace in return for his hospitality, that he became a canonised saint of the Church. Meditate with attention how advantageous it was to this saint to receive Christ in his house, what a glorious use he put it to, what return of grace he received from the hand of the Lord, what glory he now enjoys for this alms that he gave Him ; and see how important it is to thee to do the like, when the occasion presents itself of receiving Christ into thy house in the persons of His poor, and of giving them of thy temporal goods, that He may give thee eternal treasures.

Third Point.—Consider St. John the Evangelist reposing at that table, on the breast of Christ, learning the sublime mysteries which he afterwards proclaimed to the world. Contemplate the love that Christ showed him, the intimacy with which St. John reposed on His breast ; and how there was no jealousy amongst the disciples on account of that favour, all considering him worthy of it for his great sanctity, and learn to rely on the Lord and to repose in Him from all thy fatigues ; give Him thanks for the graces He grants to His chosen ones, and excite thyself to serve Him with perfection, that thou mayest deserve to be one of them.

Fourth Point.—Consider how, on finishing the supper, Christ gave thanks to His Eternal Father, with all His holy companions ; Judas alone left the table before the conclusion of the repast, and without waiting to return thanks, which, as St. Cyril tells us, was the cause of his perdition : be warned by his misfortune, and do not follow in his footsteps ; see how important it is, when thou dost communicate, to remain and give due thanks to God for the graces He has conferred on thee, and to do the like after any benefit that thou mayest receive.

¹ Bonav. de Med. Christi, c. lxxiii.

FORTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE DOCTRINE OF THE GOSPEL.—(MATT. XXIII.)

Christ told His disciples to fulfil the commands of the priests who held the place and the authority of Moses, but not to imitate their works, because they were contrary to the doctrine of God : they put on vanity, put ye on humility and the desire of pleasing God alone, for he who humbles himself shall be exalted, and he who exalteth himself shall be humbled.

First Point.—Consider the respect that Christ our Redeemer always showed to the priests on account of their high dignity, commanding that they should be obeyed and respected, because they were priests of God, even though they were wicked. Learn of Him this lesson, and try always to respect them, gilding over their faults if they have any, and not regarding their failing but their dignity.

Second Point.—Consider the assistance that God gives His prelates, for even when they are not good, He directs their tongues that they may teach the truth and may not mislead men, and that we may be safely guided by them, according to what Christ teaches us, namely, "All things whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do" (Matt. xxiii. 3). Give thanks to the Lord for this singular providence that He has over His prelates, and establish in thy heart the counsel of Christ to obey their words as the word of God, even if their works are not in conformity with them.

Third Point.—Consider what Christ reprehends in bad prelates, that they do not practise what they teach, that they impose heavy burdens on others which they will not carry themselves, and that they seek in their actions the honour of the world and not that of God. Take warning

from them, and see that thou do not fall into the same vices and deserve the reproach that they received. Contemplate in the solitude of thy heart what a source of misery it would be, if leading others to heaven by thy words, thou wert condemned for thy evil works: and follow at once the footsteps of Christ, preaching and teaching more by the example of good works than by the clamour of words, putting first in execution thyself what thou wouldst teach to others.

Fourth Point.—Consider the sentence with which Christ terminates His discourse, namely, that he who is higher in dignity should be the greater in humility, and that he who holds the highest post should put himself in the lowest place, and make himself the servant of all. Apply these words to thyself, as if thou wert present and heard them from the mouth of the Saviour, and enter into account with thyself and see if thou fulfillest them, and ask of God grace to put them in practice, and to serve all men in order to deserve the grace of the Lord.

FORTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

ON THE SERMON THAT CHRIST PREACHED AFTER THE LAST SUPPER.—(JOHN III.)

The seraphic doctor, St. Bonaventure,¹ puts in this place the sermon that Christ preached to His apostles before leaving the supper-room, and on account of its being long, he divides it into five points, which we will give here in the order used by the holy doctor.

First Point.—Consider the affection that Christ shows His apostles on parting with them, and how in this last discourse He consoles them, saying that His absence will

¹ S. Bonav. Med. lxxv.

be short, and that He will soon return to comfort them, and that He will never leave them orphans. Hear these words, and console thyself, rejoicing to have so loving a Father, and beg of Him to fulfil towards thee what He promises His disciples.

Second Point.—Consider how in this sermon that He preached to them at His departure He recommends them, not once, but many times, to love one another with the bond of fraternal charity, telling them that by this they were to be known as His disciples, if they loved one another cordially. Attend to this command; see how the disciples loved each other with extreme charity, and how thou shouldst love all thy brethren, and beg of the Lord grace to fulfil all that He commands thee.

Third Point.—The third recommendation He made to them was to keep His holy commandments, saying to them, "If you love me, keep my commandments," and "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me" (John xiii. 21). Consider how important this observance is to thee, and do not transgress any of the divine precepts, and purpose in thy heart, and give the Lord thy word, to die a thousand deaths rather than break them.

Fourth Point.—Consider how in this sermon Christ armed and prepared His disciples for the tribulations they would have to suffer, prophesying them and putting before them the fruit they were to obtain thereby, comparing it to that which is gathered from the corn, that is sown and rots in the earth; and telling them to take courage to suffer, that He would be by their side; that for this He had come into the world; that their trial would be short, and then it would be changed into eternal delight. Ruminates slowly on these truths, and draw from this honeycomb sweetness in thy bitterness, and strength and courage for the fight.

Fifth Point.—The fifth point that St. Bonaventure considers is, that Christ terminated this sermon by lifting up His eyes to heaven and asking His Eternal Father to

guard His Apostles, recommending to Him the thing that He had most at heart, and not only for their own sake, but for that of all those who were to believe in Him, begging of His Father to take them under His care and protection, and to make them His companions, not in His sufferings, but in the joys of His eternal glory. Consider that thou art of the number of those for whom Christ prayed; that He then had thee present in His mind, and prayed for thee to His Eternal Father. See how much He loved thee, and how He had thee written in His innermost heart, and remark what He asked of His Father for thee, and how thou shouldst appreciate and repay so signal a benefit by loving and serving Him with all the strength of thy heart and soul.

FORTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

HOW ST. JOHN AND ST. JAMES ASKED CHRIST FOR THE FIRST PLACES IN HEAVEN THROUGH THE MEDIATION OF THEIR MOTHER.

Christ, going up to Jerusalem with His disciples, foretold His Passion; and at this time the mother of the sons of Zebedee came and begged for them the first places in His kingdom. Christ reprimanded them, and offered them His chalice, which they accepted, and those present were indignant at their petition, from which Christ took the opportunity of teaching them that humility is the way to obtain the first place in heaven.

First Point.—Consider how, when Christ goes up to Jerusalem, which signifies vision of peace, He goes conversing on His Passion and death, to teach us that the road to reach the celestial Jerusalem and the clear vision of God is through His Passion, by suffering for His love,

as He suffered for ours. Consider the importance of obtaining that happiness, which is no less than heaven itself and eternal life ; and do not shrink from suffering, but rather embrace the cross with eagerness, that thou mayest arrive at the possession of the glory of the Lord.

Second Point.—Consider how these two sons took counsel with their mother about their desire for honours and dignities, and how they erred, as those always err who, on this point, are guided by flesh and blood ; place thyself in the presence of God our Lord, and ask counsel of Him, in all that concerns thee, and especially in what regards thy soul ; do not take counsel with thy relations, who are guided by their affections, and will lead thee into an abyss of difficulties and troubles, and, what is still more to be lamented, to thy condemnation.

Third Point.—Consider the answer of Christ, who said to them, “ You know not what you ask,” for an ambitious person is ignorant and does not understand what he seeks, and the labyrinth of difficulties into which he plunges himself when he pretends to honours and dignities, nor does he know what he asks ; because he knows not how worthless is that for which he longs, for it is but a little air, whereas he seeks it as if it were of value. Let not the glitter of the human honours that shines in the world blind thee : beg of God His grace to know what they are, to despise them, to abandon them, and not to spend thy life and thy peace in pursuing them, but in seeking eternal and celestial honours, which are the only true ones, and those which Christ taught us to seek in this world.

Fourth Point.—Consider the indignation that this ambition on the part of the two brothers caused in the disciples, and how Christ calmed them by teaching them that humility is the road to heavenly greatness, and the means of reaching the first places in His kingdom. Ponder first, how important it is for thee, to follow the lowly road of humility, in order not to disturb the peace of

others, with thy pretensions and singularities, which always unsettle any community, however holy it may be; and secondly, that it is also important to follow this lowly path, taking here below the last place, in order to deserve in heaven the highest one, and to serve all as a slave, in order to reign hereafter with Christ in His blessed kingdom.

FORTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

ON THE TREACHERY OF JUDAS.—(MATT. XXVI. ; JOHN XIII.)

First Point.—The Evangelist says that Christ, being seated at table with His disciples, was troubled, and all saw that He was disturbed, and then He said: "Amen, in truth, I say to you, that one of you is about to betray me; one of those who are at table with me, will this day betray me." Consider the grief of Christ at this moment, for we do not read that He was ever troubled when speaking of His Passion, and He was troubled when He spoke of the betrayal that one of His disciples was to make of His person, in which He showed the great grief that the loss of that soul caused His spirit, and the enormity of the sin that Judas meditated in his breast, since Christ showed more grief for that than for the whole of His Passion. O Saviour of the world, how perfectly is the delicacy of Thy love discovered in this circumstance, since Thou feelest so profoundly the loss of one of Thy chosen ones! O Lord, what occasions of grief must I not have given Thee! I, who have sold thee, not once like Judas, but as often as I have sinned, which has been many times, more than there are atoms in the sun; if of Judas Thou didst say, "Woe to that man, it were better for him if that man had not been born" (Matt. xviii. 24). I also say of myself: "Woe to me, it were better for me that

I had never been born than have offended Thee;" it grieves me, Lord, more than anything else could, it grieves me, that I have offended Thee, and that I have not served Thee as in duty I was bound to do.

Second Point.—Consider how, on hearing these words of Christ, the disciples were afflicted, and what they were eating seemed like gall in their mouths; they began to tremble and to say: Perchance or unfortunately Is it I? and even Judas said it like the rest, but not with the grief and regret that he ought to have had for his sin, but to justify himself, and to dissemble his wickedness before the other disciples, who knew that their own consciences did not reproach them with such a crime, but they with humility misdoubted their own weakness lest they should fall into it. O my soul, contemplate the trouble of the disciples lest they should fall into that act of treason; and if they, being so holy, tremble, with how much more reason shouldst thou not tremble, lest in thy weakness thou fall into a like sin. If an apostle was lost, who can be secure? Beg of God to hold thee in His hand, and rather to annihilate thee than to let thee fall into such wickedness.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ read Judas's heart to him and told him to hasten to do his business, and after having communicated with the rest, Judas, without waiting to give thanks or hear the sermon of our Saviour, went out to betray his Lord. Ponder for thy good how God reads thy heart, and knows and recognises all that passes there, and correct thy thoughts and regulate thy desires that they may not displease the Lord; ponder, also, how great was the desire of Christ to see Himself in the hands of His enemies, since He hurried Judas; and what a great evil befell this unhappy man for not remaining with the rest to hear the discourse of Christ, since at that very time he betrayed Him, and be warned by his example lest thou fall into sin and lose the grace of God.

Fourth Point.—Consider Judas in the darkness of the

night going into the house of the priests and Pharisees, treating and bargaining with them about how much they were to give him for Christ, arranging it with them and asking them for armed men and soldiers to seize Him and deliver Him up; see to what a depth of malice an apostle reached, and how just was the grief that Christ felt for his fall: enter into that palace, and beg of Judas to sell Him to thee, and offer much more than the priests, and if necessary even to sell thyself to buy Him. Grieve over the low price at which the most precious jewel of heaven and earth is sold, and turn thine eyes on thyself and see how many times thou hast sold Him at a still lower price, for some little pleasure, for a vile interest, for some breath of human esteem, and for things of even less value, and return and redeem Him and buy Him again, doing worthy penance for thy sins without taking note of the price, the cost, or the labour.

FORTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.—(LUKE XVI.)

Christ says that there was a rich man, at whose door sat a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and desiring the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table; the rich man died and was buried in hell, Lazarus also died and was carried to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man seeing him there, begged of him one drop of water to mitigate his torments, and it was not granted him.

First Point.—Consider how Christ compares the rich and the poor, the life of the one with that of the other, and the very different termination that they had; in order to show to us what passes in the drama of this world and in the retribution of the next, how sinners

pass the time of this life, which is but a breath, in pleasures and delights, and in a moment go down into hell ; and the just pass it in poverty, mortification, and penance, and are carried by angels to heaven : contemplate attentively how this comedy is gone through, how soon it comes to an end, and how everything is a dream and an evident deceit, without truth, or being, or substance, and what blindness it is for the sake of playing this or that part to lose eternal life ; and do thou abandon all that is frail and perishable to obtain that which is true and never ending.

Second Point.—Consider the life of the rich man and that of the poor one ; the part that each acts in this play. Christ does not name the rich man, but He does the poor one, because though the powerful have a great name in this world and the poor have none, at the tribunal of God they change places, and the poor is celebrated and well known and the rich is as if he were not, for each one is appreciated according to his deserts and not according to his riches ; see what thou art worth in God's eyes. Consider that the rich man during this life was well clothed and cared for, the poor man was infirm, covered with sores, and longed for the crumbs that fell from the great man's table ; see with how little he was content and yet could not obtain it ; the rich man was much esteemed by all, the poor man, on the contrary, was despised ; in this manner they passed the course of this life whilst this farce lasted, but when it came to a close, the grandeur of the one and the misery of the other were ended, and they changed places ; he who had been rich and favoured became poor and miserable in eternal torments, and he who had been poor and despised became rich and glorious in eternal felicity. In this manner the drama of this life passes away. Open thine eyes to this disenchantment ; see which of the two thou wouldst follow.

Third Point.—After considering the life of each, consider their respective deaths, and see how the angels assisted the beggar Lazarus, comforting him in that dread-

ful moment, and not leaving him until they had placed him in the bosom of Abraham; the rich man was accompanied by devils, who did not leave him until they had buried him in hell. Contemplate how both were stripped on leaving this world of their clothes, and all they possessed; from the poor man were taken his beggary, his sores, and the poverty he suffered, he was clothed with glory and most magnificently enriched; the rich man was stripped of his clothes, his pleasures, his temporal goods, his servants, and all his possessions, and was left in the greatest poverty. Contemplate what must have been the joy of the one and the torment of the other on passing, the first from the depths of poverty to the height of opulence, and the second, on the contrary, from the greatest riches to the profoundest beggary. Oh, how precious in the sight of God is the death of the just, and how despicable that of sinners! The one is full of sweetness, the other overflowing with bitterness; the one rich, the other poor; the one happy, the other miserable. Grant me, Lord, to serve Thee in poverty, patience, and humility during this life, in order to deserve to die the death of the just and not that of sinners.

Fourth Point.—Consider the glory of Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham and now reigning in heaven, and the torments of the rich man suffering in hell, to whom for greater torment Lazarus was shown in his glory, that he might see what he had lost by not having had pity on him, and the happiness that he might have bought with the crumbs that fell from his table. See Lazarus surrounded on all sides with delight, without one atom of pain or even a desire unsatisfied, the rich man, on the contrary, in the fires of hell, so poor and miserable that not even the drop of water that he asked of Lazarus was granted him; because neither was the glory of the one nor the torment of the other to be diminished by one drop. Consider all this, and, above all, the eternity of its duration, and do what thou wouldst wish to have done at the hour of death.

*FORTY-NINTH MEDITATION.**For the same Day.*

HOW CHRIST WENT TO PRAY IN THE GARDEN.

First Point.—Consider how Christ, the hour of His Passion and Death approaching, withdrew to pray to His eternal Father, and exhorted His disciples, and in them all of us, to pray with Him, teaching us to prepare ourselves by prayer for all occasions that may present themselves, whether of temptations for the soul or of troubles and labours for the body, appealing to God for the assistance of His grace to overcome them, and not to give way to them through our weakness. Beg of the Lord to give thee this spirit of prayer, and since He commands thee to pray, to take thee with Him as He did the holy apostles, and to teach thee to pray, thereby doing honour to God and begging of Him His grace.

Second Point.—Accompany Christ in this first station of His Passion ; see how He leaves the city in the silence of the night, surrounded by His disciples, all full of apprehensions. See how He passes the torrent of Cedron. I hear the rustling of the cedar-trees buffeted by the wind augmenting the noise of the waters, and the songs of the night-birds, and the cries of the animals, joining with the darkness of the night to invite us to sorrow. See how Christ enters the garden to save the world lost in another garden ; and because Adam lost it with joy and laughter, Christ undertakes its recovery with grief and fatigue, which wounded Him to the very soul, and was so great that He did not dissemble it, but manifested it to His disciples, saying, “My soul is sorrowful, even unto death ;” as if asking consolation of them in the interior combat that He endured. O my Redeemer, who would not desire to console Thee on this occasion ! Oh, who would not give Thee some relief in Thy sorrow ! Why

hast Thou chosen, Lord, to give way to this weariness for my love? What shall I do to give Thee some consolation in so grievous an affliction? Let angels come, and give Thee joy, for they know how to bless and praise Thee. I offer Thee the praise that they all give Thee; and if there is joy in heaven at the conversion of a sinner, I, who am the greatest sinner in the world, desire to be converted that I may give Thee joy; give me Thy grace that I may weep over my sins, and relieve the grief Thou hast taken on Thyself for me.

Third Point.—Meditate how Christ our Redeemer separates Himself from His disciples to pray. Though He could very well have prayed in the supper-room and in their company, for neither the one nor the other could disturb Him, yet He wished to teach us to retire from the bustle of men, however good they be, into solitude, in order to dedicate ourselves to the contemplation of God and of His Divine mysteries. Learn from the Saviour to leave all business and to retire into solitude whenever it be possible to thee, according to thy state, in order to pray to God with the reverence and attention that thou owest Him.

Fourth Point.—Consider how He divided His disciples, eight of whom He left resting, and of the three more intimate ones He asked to pray with Him, as more perfect and nearer allied to Him; learn to profit by the prayers of the good, for, though Christ was not in want of them, yet He taught us to accompany our prayers with those of the holy and just, and that the prayer of many is very powerful with God; but His desire did not produce its effect, for the disciples fell asleep, and were therefore conquered when tribulation came upon them. Take heed and consider how many times God calls thee to prayer, and thou refusest obedience, and for having been wanting in that respect thou art afterwards defeated by temptation. Listen to the Saviour, who tells thee that His soul is sorrowful even unto death, and begs of thee to watch and pray one hour with Him. Offer thyself willingly to enter into prayer with Him,—ask His leave to pray in

His company, in order that the fervour of His prayer may supply what is wanting to thine.

FIFTIETH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD.

Christ said to the Pharisees : A householder planted a vineyard and rented it to some labourers, and in due time sent to require of them the fruits, but these ungrateful men, instead of paying, ill-treated his servants, and at last put to death his son, that they might remain in possession of the vineyard. What will the householder then do but punish these tenants, and give his vineyard to others, who will pay him in due season? This, then, is what God will do with those who are ungrateful for His benefits. He will deprive them of His kingdom, giving it to others who will show gratitude to Him.

First Point.—Consider how God has confided to thee the vineyard of thy soul, that thou mayest labour in it and cultivate it with holy works, and plant and adorn it with many virtues, and thou allowest it to be overrun with thistles and thorns of vices and evil habits. Hasten, then, to clean and cultivate it, lest it happen to thee as to Adam, who, for not having made use of Paradise that God had confided to him, lost His grace, and with it all the goods that he had received. Labour and cultivate the vineyard of thy soul, lest the wrath of God fall upon thee and thou lose His grace and friendship.

Second Point.—Consider that thy soul has not been given to thee as a gift, but rented to thee as to those tenants, and thus there must be a day of reckoning when the fruits will be asked of thee. Cast a glance over all the course of thy life, see how many years thou hast had

this vineyard in thy possession, with the fountains and streams of so many sacraments, and with the culture of so many evangelical labourers who help thee in cultivating it, and with the rain of so many helps and graces and Divine inspirations; and what fruit hast thou given up to this time, and what account wilt thou render to the Lord when He shall ask it of thee? Try to make up so that thou mayest not be found wanting, but mayest obtain eternal life.

Third Point.—Consider the ingratitude of these tenants, and be not surprised at the ingratitude of men towards thee, since their ingratitude to God is so great; then consider the patience of the servants and that of the son himself, who were sent for the fruits, and how, being so ill-treated, they did not defend themselves, but suffered these outrages for the love of God; and learn to suffer for Him as He suffered for thee, if it so happen that thou be ill-treated and dishonoured for His sake, or for doing what He has commanded; for the servant is not greater than the master, nor the prophet superior to Him that sent him; and if Christ was ill-treated because He preached the truth, it is not strange that the same be done to thee because thou dost the things of His service. Offer thyself willingly to suffer and to die if need be for His love.

Fourth Point.—Consider seriously the conclusion of this parable, and the tremendous sentence with which the Saviour terminates it, "Therefore I say to you, that the kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation yielding the fruit thereof." This is the pain due to ingratitude; open thine eyes and see that it fall not on thee, and that God does not take from thee the sacraments, the inspirations, the helps of the graces that He has given thee, and with them the kingdom of heaven, because thou dost not work as thou shouldst, and that He does not give them to others who will give Him the fruit He expects. O Lord, do not chastise me so rigorously as to take Thy hand from me, and withdraw from me Thy graces. I own that I do not deserve them, but

show Thyself what Thou art, and have mercy on me : grant me a reprieve, give me Thy favour that I may amend and serve Thee, and recover what I have lost up to this time, and that I may deserve to be one of the labourers of Thy vineyard in order to serve Thee for ever.

FIFTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

ON THE PRAYER OF CHRIST IN THE GARDEN.—(MATT. XXVI.)

First Point.—Consider how Christ, withdrawn from His disciples in the gloom of the trees, prayed to His Eternal Father with deep reverence, both exterior and interior ; for, as the Evangelist says, He prostrated His face to the earth, adoring and reverencing the great majesty of the Most High ; and interiorly He began His prayer with great attention, respect, and reverence, resigning Himself entirely to the will of His Father, and begging Him that not what He asked should be done, but that which was God's pleasure and will. "*Father, He says, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me ; but not my will, but Thine be done.*" Thou hast here much to contemplate, and to learn to pray to God with all reverence of body and soul, and with all humility and resignation to the Divine will. Contemplate what thy Redeemer says and does ; reflect, beg, and receive in this garden ; take and learn so high a lesson in what is so important to thee as to know how to pray to the Majesty of God.

Second Point.—Consider how He arose from prayer and came to His disciples, and exhorted them to pray and watch, that they might not fall into temptation, and from the disciples He returned to prayer a second and a third time ; in which thou shouldst learn the care that

Christ has of thee, and that which thou shouldst have of those that belong to thee, and how thou hast to link action with contemplation, occupying thyself in such manner with the one that it impede not the other, going from prayer to labour and thy exterior business, and from this returning, without being ruffled, to prayer ; beg of Christ the grace to execute what He teaches.

Third Point.—Consider the perseverance of Christ in prayer, because, not being heard the first nor yet the second time, He returned a third and repeated the same prayer, crying out with anxiety of heart to His Eternal Father. Learn the lesson He here teaches thee of patience, hope, confidence, and perseverance, and do not give way in thy petitions if thou art not heard, but confide in the Lord, and persevere at His door, and thy prayer shall bring forth good fruit.

Fourth Point.—Enter by consideration into the interior of Christ's heart, and see what He thinks, what He meditates, and for whom He prays to His Father, and thou wilt find, as St. Bonaventure says,¹ that He does not ask for Himself, but for thee and for all mortals whom He has present to Him, and whose sins and thine He then contemplated, which was the bitter chalice that He had to drink, the perdition of mankind, and the sin that was committed by those who were to put Him to death, and who would not profit by that death, but would blind themselves and be hardened in their sins ; grieving Him very much, He cried out to His Father, begging of Him to ordain the salvation of the world in such manner that He might not have to drink so bitter a chalice, but that not His will but His Father's be done. Thy sins, O my soul, are what grieve Him and afflict Him, and make Him sweat blood and suffer this agony : what sorrow shouldst thou not have for having caused Him such bitterness ! O Lord, would that I had not been born, that I might not have offended Thee ! Oh, who would not die rather than sin ! It grieves me above all I can say to have committed the least offence against Thee. O my

¹ S. Bonav. Med. lxxv.

God, pray for me, and my prayer is all my hope, and in it I confide for obtaining the pardon that I deserve not : since Thou prayest for Thine enemies, and I am the greatest of them all, do not forget me.

FIFTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE PRODIGAL SON.—(LUKE XV.)

Christ, speaking to His disciples, said to them this parable : A man had two sons ; the youngest asked for his share of the inheritance, and having received it, he went and wasted it, living luxuriously ; but reduced to the greatest misery and need, he recognised his fault and returned to his father, begging his pardon ; his father received him with great joy at having recovered the son he had lost.

First Point.—Consider in this young man who, following his pleasure, left his father's house, and came to such misery, that he was reduced to earn his bread by feeding vile animals ; what man is separated from God and left to his own judgment—into what misfortunes does he not fall, and what misery does he not suffer ? See this young man once rich, now poor, and once honourable, now dishonoured, once esteemed, now despised ; he who was served, now serving, from master made a slave, abandoned, naked, hungry, and without resource or where to seek help, forgotten and left alone by all who before sought him, all of which came from his leaving his father's house and following his own evil judgment ; and much more than this does the sinner suffer in his soul, when he leaves God and follows the advice of his passions, for in an instant he finds himself poor of all virtue, stripped of the garment of grace, abandoned by God and His saints,

the slave of Satan, and reduced to the utmost misery ; see in this mirror what the world and its friends are, and the effects of sin, and do not follow thy will but that of God, who is thy true Father ; and finally, purpose to die a thousand deaths rather than losesight of Him or leave His side.

Second Point.—Consider what Christ the Saviour says of this youth, that he was the type of a sinner who leaves God, and who, coming back to himself, for he had lost his senses, considers the miserable state into which his false judgment has brought him, and determines to seek the remedy, which is to return to his Father's house ; in this is all thy hope, in turning thine eyes on thyself, and considering the state to which the guilt and misery of thy soul have brought thee, and the danger thou art in of falling into hell. Oh that thou wouldst open thine eyes and turn them on thyself ! Turn them many times on thyself, taking heed of thy condition, and return to God. Consider what St. Peter Chrysologus says, that abundance drew this youth from his home, and necessity brought him back to it ; and acknowledge the good that comes of poverty and the dangers that accompany riches, and purpose firmly to embrace the poverty of Christ, and to fly from riches and abundance, that they may not cause thee to leave God and lose Him for ever.

Third Point.—Consider the confusion with which this youth returned to the presence of his father, confessing his sin, and saying publicly : Father, I have sinned before God and against thee ; and I am not worthy to be called thy son. Contemplate the breaking of his heart and the contrition of his soul ; see him strike his breast ; see the tears that, falling from his eyes, wash the stains of his sins and imitate his contrition ; striking thy breast and weeping for thy sins, prostrate before the majesty of God, begging His pardon with very firm purpose of amendment and confidence that thou wilt obtain mercy from His powerful hand.

Fourth Point.—Contemplate the joy and delight with which the merciful father received his son, and the signs

of joy that were manifested in his house, and the favours he granted him instead of inflicting punishment, running out to receive him with open arms, embracing him, kissing him, clothing him with the best garment he had, giving him his own ring, and inviting with open house all his friends and acquaintances : all of which is the image and representation of the infinite mercy of God, and of the joy with which He receives a converted sinner ; the favours that He bestows on him, clothing him with His grace and enriching him with His gifts, and the feast which the angels make in heaven on account of his contrition and conversion. Oh, blessed be so good, so tender, so merciful a God, who grants such graces to those who have offended Him if they truly grieve for their sins, and return to His service ! Rejoice to have such a God, such a Father, and such a Lord, who proceeds so mercifully towards His servants, and acquire great confidence in His pity for the remission of thy sins, and learn to pardon the offences of thy neighbour, when pardon is asked of thee by one who has grieved thee.

FIFTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

ON THE AGONY THAT CHRIST SUFFERED WHILE PRAYING
IN THE GARDEN.

First Point.—Consider Christ our Lord praying in the garden to His eternal Father with great agony and profound grief of heart, which He suffered as man, enflamed with the fire of most ardent desires and most fervent charity, His body agitated and His face sweating streams of blood, with which the ground was watered, whilst He cried out to God and prayed with unspeakable fervour ; approach and gather up that sweat which He

sheds for thee, and do not let it fall to the earth, but receive it into the innermost recess of thy heart ; offer Him the flesh of thy heart to be saturated with that sweat, and contemplate what Christ goes through in this prayer, and do not separate thyself from His side, assisting and serving Him with great devotion.

Second Point.—Consider how the angel St. Michael, as St. Bonaventure¹ suggests, came down to comfort the Lord, either, as the same saint says, with holy words, signifying to Him how He had offered His prayer to God, and the sweat of blood, and the agony of His heart, and that He should be comforted, for it was the Divine will that He should suffer for mankind ; or else, as others say,² accompanying Him in His prayer with the same form of exterior sign of agony and sweat, because it is a great consolation to those who suffer to have with them companions in the same suffering. See how thou canst give some comfort to Christ our Redeemer in His sorrows, by imitating Him and accompanying Him in His agony and Passion. O my Redeemer ! from this moment I offer myself to be Thy companion in all Thy pains, give me leave to accompany Thee, and grace that I may not leave Thee until I die on a cross with Thee. See how the angels come down from heaven and accompany those who pray, and offer their prayers and petitions to God ; as St. Michael offered those of Christ, and formerly those of Daniel ; and St. Raphael those of Tobias,—so will thine be offered, if thou prayest as thou shouldst.

Third Point.—Consider how grievous is the weight of our sins, since it made God, who with one finger sustains and moves the whole of creation, sweat even His very blood. Consider that it does not weigh on thee because thou dost not consider it ; beg of Christ light and grace to know thy sins and the grief that thou shouldst have for them, and see what agony thou shouldst suffer for thy soul when Christ suffers so bitterly for the souls of others, and most especially for thine.

¹ S. Bonav. Med. lxxv.

² P. Pineda.

Fourth Point.—Consider the anguish that Christ suffered as man, at seeing already so near the time of His Passion and of His very bitter death, which was so great that the very thought of it made Him sweat streams of blood ; and think what anguish sinners will feel at the hour of death, when the eternal pains which their sins deserve present themselves to their view. Bring to thy mind the fire of purgatory, the eternal torments of hell, and the agony of death, and pray to the Eternal Father, begging of Him that thou mayest not be so unhappy as to have to drink of so bitter a chalice, and pray to Christ, that since for our love He took on Himself these agonies and bitter pangs, that He may deliver thee from eternal torments, and give thee a very tender compassion for the sufferings that He endured.

FIFTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Third Sunday of Lent.

ON THE CURE OF THE MAN POSSESSED BY A DUMB DEVIL.
(LUKE XI.)

Christ sent out a devil from a man who was dumb ; some of the bystanders were struck with admiration, and others murmured, saying, that it was by the power of Satan that He sent out devils ; others asked miracles of Him ; and the Saviour proved to them with modesty how it was by virtue of the Holy Spirit that He sent out devils ; and at this juncture a woman from the crowd exclaimed and said : Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the breast that gave Thee milk ; and Christ answered : Blessed are they who hear the Word of God and put it in practice.

First Point.—Consider the effect of sin in the soul ; for, as Ven. Bede says, this possessed man that Christ cured was a symbol of the sinner, and some of the other

Evangelists say that he was not only dumb, but deaf and blind, and possessed by the devil; these are the effects that sin produces in the soul; sin renders the soul deaf, that it may not hear the Word of God, blind, that it may not know nor see its wounds, and dumb, that it may not confess its fault, nor praise God, and may be thus enslaved to Satan: these calamities sin will bring on thee if thou givest it place in thy soul; therefore acquire a great hatred of it, and make a firm resolution before God to die a thousand deaths rather than sin. And if thy conscience warns thee of any grievous sin, beg of God to have mercy on thee, as He had on the possessed man in the Gospel, and to deliver thee from the tyranny of the devil, and to give thee ears wherewith to hear Him, eyes wherewith to see Him, a tongue wherewith to bless Him, and grace to enable thee to serve Him.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ was murmured against because He performed this miracle, delivering the man from the power of Satan; for even if thou wert to do miracles murmurers will never be wanting to complain of thee: take note of the patience and meekness with which Christ bore these reproaches, and learn how thou art to bear them, if thou find thyself murmured against and envied by men; see how little their judgments are to be relied on, and value only the judgment of God, of whom beg patience and meekness that thou mayest conduct thyself as thou oughtest in the contradictions that He may send for the increase of thy crown.

Third Point.—Consider those words of the Saviour: "*Every kingdom divided against itself will be destroyed*"; even hell itself, if there be divisions there, will destroy itself: peace is God's child, and discord that of Satan; fly this last, and seek the first, that thou mayest not fall into eternal perdition. Beg of God to give thee grace to be an angel of peace, to keep peace with every one, and to establish it amongst thy neighbours.

Fourth Point.—Consider the courage of that devout woman, who, fearless of the indignation of Christ's

enemies in their presence and hearing, raised her voice and gave Him great praise, whilst others blamed Him, and learn courage not to allow any human respect to make thee cowardly in God's service, but always to declare thyself for Him, and take His side when He is outraged. Be ashamed that a woman should be more courageous and manly than thou in breaking with the world and standing up for the honour of God; resolve to serve Him and defend Him, and to further His honour and glory, notwithstanding all His enemies, offering for this purpose thy blood and thy life if they be necessary for His holy service.

FIFTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

HOW CHRIST WAS APPREHENDED.—(MATT. XXVI.; MARK XIV.)

First Point.—Consider how Christ, rising from His prayer, burning and sweating and all bathed in His blood, came to His disciples and said to them: "Sleep and rest, for he who is to betray me is now at hand; arise and let us go hence." See the spirit in which He arises from His prayer, and how He tells them to rest, because He takes on Himself their labours. He warns them of the danger, that they may be on their guard; He alone takes no care for Himself, but rather with intrepidity and resolution He presents Himself before the danger, and advances to receive the blows in His own person, that they may not fall on His disciples. O my soul! what a sublime lesson thou hast here to teach thee not to be cowardly in the service of God, but rather to enter with joy on the most arduous undertakings, if they be for His service, to expose thy life for thy neighbours, and to receive the blows in order to save them labour. O good

Jesus, how great was Thy love, since thou offeredst Thy life to save me from suffering! give me grace to learn this lesson, and to put into execution all that Thou teachest me.

Second Point.—Consider how, whilst He was speaking to His disciples, Judas arrived at the head of the soldiers with arms and torches, and approached apparently to give Him the kiss of peace, which was the signal by which he betrayed his Lord, according to the arrangement he had made with the priests; and he kissed Christ, and Christ kissed him, as though He kissed the scourge in His Father's hand and the instrument of His Passion: see those two mouths touch each other, and how our Saviour was not disgusted at having to approach His lips to that sink of fetid corruption. Oh, what must His feelings have been at seeing His disciple become the captain of thieves and homicides! and what tears must not have fallen from His eyes to deplore the perdition of that soul! and how must He not have lifted up His heart to His Eternal Father, offering Him that injury which He suffered from His friend, and imploring salvation for him! Listen to those words which He spoke, so full of meekness and charity: "Friend, whereto art thou come? Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss of peace?" But by what snare could the Author of peace be entrapped except by a sign of peace? O Lord, how well dost Thou teach us meekness and patience in the midst of the greatest tribulations. O my soul! meditate on all that here occurs for thy good and profit, and take heed lest thou imitate Judas by delivering up thy Master into the hands of His enemies by sin, through a kiss of peace: that is, in prayer and in the sacraments, and especially in the most holy Sacrament of the altar; and consider as if said to thyself these words: "Friend, whereto art thou come?" To thee they are said, and Christ asks thee what thou camest to do in His service, why thou enteredst His house. Ruminates on these words, and see how thou fulfillest thy duty.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ then turned to the soldiers who came to seize Him, and asked them whom they sought. And they answered, Jesus of Nazarus: then Christ answered, "I am He" with great majesty, and they, terrified by the thunder of that voice, fell to the ground. Ponder on the dread that formidable and terrible voice will cause the wicked in the day of judgment when it pronounces that sentence: "Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." Oh, unhappy those who are to hear it! fear and tremble already at this awful voice of the Lord; and consider how easy it would have been for the Saviour to have precipitated them all into hell by commanding the earth to open and swallow them alive, and He did not make use of His power, but delivered Himself up to die like a gentle lamb. O most sweet Jesus! how great is Thy meekness, and how Thou bindest Thy hands to offer Thyself as a sacrifice to Thy Eternal Father; great is the power of Thy word, in it I confide and will always confide; I beg of Thee speak but one word only for me, to defend me from the power and tyranny of my enemies, and to give me grace to offer myself voluntarily for Thee as Thou offeredst Thyself for me.

Fourth Point.—Consider how all that army arose, terrified at what had just occurred, and how Judas encouraged them that they might not be disheartened, but complete the arrest, and Christ repeated to them a second time that He was Jesus of Nazarus, whom they sought, and that they were to let His disciples go free. Oh, how differently do men behave! for they always try to escape from death themselves and leave others to suffer: the soldiers were very ready to take the disciples, but the words of Christ, who had struck them to the earth, bound their hands that they might not touch them, and they let them go. O most blessed Jesus! many thanks I render Thee for this care that Thou hast of me, and because Thou defendest me from my enemies; what would become of me were it not for Thee? speak but one word in my defence, and I shall be in safety.

FIFTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the third Monday of Lent.

ON THE DOCTRINE OF THE GOSPEL.—(LUKE IV.)

Christ being in His own town, entered the synagogue and read a chapter of the Prophet Isaias, which spoke of His coming, and explained it to those present, who, indignant at hearing Him, turned Him forcibly out of the synagogue, and dragging Him out of the town, tried to throw Him down from a mountain; but He, passing out from amongst them, went safe out of their hands.

First Point.—Consider how very true is that saying of Christ, that in all places a prophet is heard and appreciated save in his own country, for Christ Himself, who was in such high esteem everywhere else, was held for nothing in His own town. Let not the love of relations or thy zeal for thy friends blind thee, but withdraw from amongst them, and be assured that in no place wilt thou be of less use than amongst them, and that for thy profit and that of thy neighbour it is right for thee, as Christ teaches, to retire from all that is flesh and blood.

Second Point.—Consider that sentence of Christ which says, "Doctor, cure thyself." Oh, what a great mistake it is to cure others and not to cure thyself! to throw water on thy neighbour's house when thine own is all in flames! Take the advice of the Saviour, put thy hand on thy breast and see thy wounds, and take pains to heal them, leaving those of thy neighbours' alone, for thine own salvation is the first thing, and thou shouldst labour for it before all else.

Third Point.—Consider the anger that the doctrine of Christ excited in the hearts of the Pharisees, for in the good it brings forth devotion and holy desires, but in the wicked it engenders anger, envy, and obstinacy, on account of their malice. Notice what passes in thy own

heart, and what effects the Word of God has on thee, and how many times thou hast heard of it, and what fruit it has produced ; weep thy past losses, and beg of the Lord, with instance and humility, that His Divine Word may have in thee the effect that He who speaks it desires, and that which it never fails to produce in the hearts of the good.

Fourth Point.—Consider the infinite power of Christ, our Redeemer and Lord, together with His meekness and patience ; since, on the one hand, He allowed Himself to be buffeted and ill-treated and chased from the synagogue with blows, and carried up to the top of a mountain to be cast down ; and, on the other, by His only will He delivered Himself from their hands and passed from amongst them. Learn meekness and patience in the contradictions that thou mayest have to suffer from thine enemies, and great confidence in the infinite power of God that He will deliver thee from them all with the greatest ease, as He delivered on this occasion His most Holy Son, preserving Him from the death that His enemies had prepared for Him.

FIFTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

HOW CHRIST OUR LORD WAS BOUND.

First Point.—Consider how, on Christ giving them leave, that crowd of soldiers approached with audacity and laid hands on Him and seized Him as a malefactor, —how they then raised the cry of success and triumph, and it must have ran through the crowd with great exultation of all those who had taken part in the enterprise, —how they congratulated each other, and then with importunity assailed and ill-treated the Saviour, insulting and

overpowering Him with as many affronts as they were capable of, then, loading Him with blows and buffets, they bound Him firmly, as Judas had warned them to do, that He might not escape them. O my soul ! it is time that thou shouldst give way to compassion and tears at seeing what thy Saviour undergoes for thee. Thou committedst the crime, and He is laden with chains for love of thee. O Lord ! what thanks can I render Thee for so great a mercy ! Give me grace, at least, to accompany Thee with the compassion that I ought, and with grief for having offended Thee.

Second Point.—Consider how St. Peter, on seeing the audacity of the soldiers, put himself on the defensive by the side of the Saviour, and with one blow cut off the ear of a soldier, but Christ turned on him and ordered him to sheath his sword, and not to impede Him from drinking the chalice of His Passion, and, at the same time, He bent down, and taking up the ear from the ground, with the greatest pity, put it in its place and cured the soldier miraculously of the wound he had received. Blessed be Thou, O Lord, who, though a prisoner, hast always Thy hands at liberty to do good to all, more especially to those who offend Thee most. Consider the peace of the Saviour of the world in the midst of that war, and the composure that He preserves amidst that great confusion ; the pity and benignity with which He cures the wounded man, and how He will not allow Himself to be defended by any one, but rather left to the will of His Father ; and learn not to avenge thyself, but to leave thy injuries in the hands of the Lord. Lift up thine eyes to heaven and see the celestial armies praising and blessing His patience which this Lord has at His command, all armed and only restrained by His will from defending Him. Accompany them thyself, and cease not to praise and bless Him with them.

Third Point.—Consider how all those who had followed Him, and had boasted of dying at His side, now ran away, and see how little we should rely on the offers of men, or

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of friends, or relations. Put all thy confidence in God, and do not imitate those who abandoned Him in His troubles by leaving Him in the time of suffering, for if thou then dost turn thy back on Him and break out into impatience and indignation, thou abandonest Christ our Lord in His Passion.

Fourth Point.—Thou hast now to follow two roads, one with the disciples who fled, and the other with Christ who goes a prisoner in the midst of His enemies : see the disciples dispersed, each going his own way, without knowing what to do, sorrowful, afflicted, and ashamed at having left their Holy Master in the power of those assassins ; such is the state of whoever leaves the company of Christ for fear or human respect ; and if thou wilt, go with St. John to the retreat of the Blessed Virgin, where, no doubt, he went to give her news of what was going on ; enter there, listen to what he says, and see the grief of the Blessed Virgin, and that of the holy women who accompany her, at these tidings, the sorrow of her heart and the tears that fall from her eyes, and how the others endeavour to console her, and in this manner they pass the whole night ; then return to Christ and accompany Him in His prison. See how they convey Him, His hands tied with cords to His waist and His feet, pushing Him half running and often dragging Him, His face burning and bruised with their blows, some advancing before, others running on to gain the favour of the high priests ; and contemplate in this sea of affronts and pains the serenity of the Saviour of the world and the peace of His soul, like a lamb in the midst of wolves suffering all these injuries without opening His mouth, and urge thyself to compassionate the great sufferings He undergoes, and to imitate the many virtues He shows forth.

*FIFTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.**For the Tuesday.*

ON THE DOCTRINE OF THE GOSPEL.—(MATT. XVIII.)

Christ teaches us in this Gospel the order that we should keep with regard to fraternal correction, looking always to the good name of our neighbours; He also teaches us that we ought to pardon as many times as we are sinned against, however often that may be, as also the power of the prayer of several who are in concord and united by charity, which obtains of the Majesty of God whatever is asked.

First Point.—Consider the care that God takes of the honour of our neighbour, since He does not allow his sins to be made known even to correct him, but rather orders that he should be warned privately, so that he may in this manner correct himself without his good name suffering; learn to look in all things to the honour of thy neighbours, as to thine own, begging of the Lord grace to fulfil His holy counsels.

Second Point.—Consider that, as St. John Chrysostom says, Christ gave this advice as medicine for our wounds, which are cured by fraternal correction, born of true charity and a desire for the good of our neighbours; from which thou shouldst learn two things: first, to admonish thy brethren of their faults with prudence and charity, that they may correct themselves—especially if it is thy duty as a prelate, or preacher, or superior, to whom this is particularly addressed, according to the opinion of St. Augustine, and with this medicine thou wilt gain them to God; secondly, to receive as medicine, prescribed by the hand of God our Lord, for the health of thy soul, the reproofs addressed to thee—accepting them with humility, submission, and desire to improve. Enter into account with thyself, and see how many wounds and

sinister evils continue in thee, because thou hast not profited by fraternal correction, nor accepted it as thou shouldst; and if thou dost receive with gratitude medicine for thy body, how much more willingly shouldst thou not receive that of the soul, as far more important.

Third Point.—Consider what Christ says, that where two or three are gathered together in His name, there will He be in the midst of them, and that if they pray with one heart and one sentiment, they will obtain whatsoever they ask; in which St. Hilary teaches, He recommends union and charity, and gives us to understand how powerful these are with God, since He abides and makes His resting-place, as the saint says, in the midst of those who are united in holy concord, without enmities, or dissensions, or differences of opinion: ask this union of charity of the Lord, and try to obtain it at the cost of whatever effort.

Fourth Point.—Consider how St. Jerome says, that these two, of whom Christ says that if they are agreed together in His name He will be in the midst of them, are the spirit and the flesh opposed to each other from the beginning, of which He says that if this opposition ceases and the flesh gives way in all and for ever to the spirit, subjecting itself to its rules and living in conformity to them, God will come and live amongst them; thou accordingly make it thy study to subject thy flesh to the spirit, and to live according to its laws, mortifying thy body, and lacerating it until thou hast destroyed all inordinate appetites and affections, that thou mayest become a worthy dwelling-place for the Lord; beg of Him His grace to gain this victory, and He will grant it thee, and will come to thee, and will enrich thee with celestial riches.

FIFTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

HOW CHRIST WAS BROUGHT BEFORE ANNAS.—(JOHN XVIII.)

First Point.—This is the second station in which thou shouldst accompany thy Saviour: enter by consideration into the house of Annas, who was high priest that year, and behold him seated with majesty on a high throne, assisted by ministers and soldiers, and Christ uncovered before him, a prisoner, with a rope round His neck, as though He were a criminal. False testimonies are brought against Him, yet He remains silent, modest, composed, and humble in body, whilst His soul is raised up to heaven, where He stands before His Eternal Father, in obedience to whom He suffers. Look, then, on the King of heaven and earth a prisoner for thy love,—the Judge of the living and the dead judged as a criminal, and the innocent as one guilty, though He never committed sin, suffering with such patience, and silent as a gentle lamb. O most sweet Jesus! how very much at Thy cost dost Thou teach us meekness, patience, humility, and the other virtues, which are the road to heaven. O my soul! come to this tribunal, be attentive to what passes there, and learn the very high lesson which the Divine Master silently reads thee and teaches thee with closed mouth. O Lord! would that I could change places with Thee,—take these chains from Thee, and be the one judged and condemned, since I am the guilty one for whom Thou art thus treated. It grieves me, Lord, that I should have been the cause of such injustice, and of the dolorous tragedy which is acted on Thee.

Second Point.—Consider the words of the high priest, how he interrogated Christ about His disciples and His doctrine; and notice that Christ answered nothing about

His disciples, because, on that occasion, they had abandoned Him, and He did not wish to publish their fault, but rather to bury it in silence—teaching thee and all of us to bury the faults of our brothers; but concerning His doctrine He answered what was right, for regarding that He never allowed the least deceit or concealment. Then a servant, who, according to some, was the same whose ear He had cured in the garden, lifted up his hand and struck Him on His Divine face, in order to please the high priest. O sacrilegious hand, how wert thou not dried up as was that of Jeroboam when he raised it against the prophet? O lovely face, in which angels delight! how art Thou so disfigured? Thou, who art the honour of heaven, how art Thou thus dishonoured? Contemplate the patience and silence, the composure and modesty, that the Saviour preserves whilst subjected to this injury, and compare it with the anger, passion, and discomposure which thou dost manifest at the least offence offered thee. Weep over thy misery, compassionate Christ, and learn to suffer affronts for His love as He suffered willingly for thine.

Third Point.—Consider those words that the Saviour said to him who had wounded Him: “If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil, but if well, why striketh thou me?” Showing Himself humbly resigned to correct any fault that He might have committed, and showing the respect that He had for the high priest as high priest, and that which we ought all to have. Consider also the words He spake to the high priest: “I have spoken openly to the world . . . ask them that have heard me.” The Saviour might easily have there declared His doctrine, and have given a full account of it without referring to the testimony of others; but He chose for our instruction not to do so, because praise in one’s own mouth is always suspicious: the Book of Proverbs says, “Let another praise thee, and not thine own mouth” (Prov. xxvii.), and Christ wished to give us a lesson of how we ought never to sing our own praises, even in defence of His doctrine,

but to leave that to others. Turn thine eyes on thyself, and accept this Divine lesson, begging of God our Lord His favour to practise it.

Fourth Point.—Enter into account with thyself, examine thy heart, and see if thou hast fallen into any of these sins, and take heed that they censure the doctrine of Christ who condemn that of their pastors and superiors, through whose mouth the Lord Himself speaks, and those buffet Him who, to please or temporise with others, offend or affront their neighbours on human points of honour. O miserable sinner! see how many times thou hast ill-treated and dishonoured Christ, in order to follow the laws of the world, and to please the powerful and those high in dignity. See also how many times thou hast censured His doctrine, and judged it falsely by criticising and condemning that of thy superiors; weep, lament, and strike thy forehead with great contrition, and consider thyself unworthy to present thyself before the Lord whom thou hast so grievously offended.

SIXTIETH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE GOSPEL.—(MATT. XV.)

The Scribes and Pharisees approached to find fault with the disciples of Christ because they did not wash their hands before eating, and Christ defended them, at the same time declaring to the people that more care should be taken to be clean of soul and pure of heart than to be clean of body.

First Point.—Consider how the enemies of Christ, not finding wherein to calumniate Him, found fault with His holy disciples, because the good are the honour of their Master, and the wicked His dishonour. Thou art a

disciple of this Lord, for as many years as thou hast lived, so many hast thou been learning His doctrine. Consider thy life and see how many defects thou hast, and correct them all, that thou mayest not dishonour so holy a Master by the faults of thy life.

Second Point.—Consider how holy the life of the apostles must have been, when so many enemies leagued together to calumniate them could find nothing to accuse them of save so light a thing as that they often did not wash their hands when they ate, as was the custom of the Jews ; rejoice at the sanctity of the disciples of the Lord, see what small motes are noticed in those who follow Him, and beg of God grace to remove from thy soul every imperfection, however small it may be.

Third Point.—Consider the silence and moderation of the disciples, who, on being calumniously accused before their Divine Master, did not defend themselves, said no word in their own favour, and for that reason the Lord defended them, taking up the cause of their honour, brought them out from the fire of calumny more glorious than gold from the crucible. Learn to be silent on like occasions, and tell God your cause, He will take it up, and thou wilt come out better from His hands ; if thou knowest how to confide thyself to them, and trust as thou shouldst in His love and Providence.

Fourth Point.—Lay all the stress of thy consideration on the sentence with which Christ concludes, namely, That we should not consider the exterior of the body, but rather the interior of the heart, for it is of little use for the hands to be washed in water if the heart be stained with sins. Look to thyself and see what great care thou dost spend on the condition of thy body, and how little on that of thy soul, and yet the latter is of such great importance, and the former of none. Remember that thou art a disciple of Christ, and that He will ask an account of thee ; see what sort of one thou wilt have to give ; weep over thy past carelessness, and take to heart the amendment of thy life, begging grace of the Lord to

appreciate thy soul as thou shouldst, and to despise the beauty of thy body.

SIXTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

HOW CHRIST WAS CONDUCTED FROM THE HOUSE OF ANNAS TO THAT OF CAIPHAS.—(MATT. XXVI. ; MARK XIV.)

First Point.—Consider, O my soul, how towards the middle of the night thy sweet Spouse was transferred, as one guilty and worthy of death, from the house of Annas to that of Caiphas. Accompany Him in this station, and look at Him as He goes along, His head uncovered and the dew of night falling on it, whilst His whole body is fatigued and covered with sweat, and weakened by the loss of the blood He has spilt. Oh, happy he to whom it were permitted to cover Him and shelter Him with the flesh of His heart! See Him bound and a prisoner, scoffed at and insulted by His enemies, entering into that other palace to be again judged and condemned,—He who inhabits as Lord the palaces of heaven. Consider, besides, how Caiphas receives Him with a look of disdain, scoffing Him as a mock king and a false master, and to all this Christ answers only by silence, and suffers all with admirable patience and modesty.

Second Point.—Consider how a council was next assembled to condemn Him to death; hear the false accusations and testimonies that are brought against Him, and how mute He is amidst it all, and does not exculpate Himself, thus atoning for the guilt of Adam, who, having sinned, excused himself, and also to teach thee not to excuse thyself in thy sins; blush before Him to find thyself so far from these virtues, for by His patience and silence He condemns thy impatience and pride,

since thou never knowest how to hold thy tongue when thou art accused, or when false testimonies are brought against thee; wert thou not devoid of reason, thou wouldst rejoice at seeing thyself calumniated like Christ our Lord. Throw thyself at His feet and say to Him, with lively affection of heart: "Lord, I am not worthy to suffer with Thee, nor like Thee; but by Thine infinite goodness, I beg and pray Thee to give me grace never to excuse myself henceforth, and to suffer for Thy love any false testimony that may be brought against me, even as "Thou sufferedst in silence for the love of me."

Third Point.—Consider how the enemies of Christ sought false testimonies to accuse Him, and Christ, on the contrary, was seeking excuses for their sins, as when, on the cross, He begged of His Eternal Father to forgive them, because they sinned through ignorance, without knowing what they did. Beg of the Lord to give thee one spark of charity for thy neighbour, and to excuse thy sins before His Eternal Father, as He excused that of His enemies, obtaining for thee pardon of thine.

Fourth Point.—Take heed lest thou fall into a sin like that which the enemies of Christ committed, by accusing and persecuting His servants, and those who follow the path of virtue, which is the same as calumniating and persecuting the Lord; be always ready to defend what is good; and be not easily moved to condemn holy actions, though others murmur at them, and speak ill of them, for such are moved by the evil spirit which ever wages war against the followers of the Redeemer; be always with Him and for Him, and defend with every effort all that is for His service, and thou shalt obtain the crown which He hath promised to all who fight for Him.

SIXTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Fourth Thursday of Lent.

HOW CHRIST HEALED THE MOTHER-IN-LAW OF ST. PETER.
(LUKE IX.)

Christ went out of the synagogue and entered into the house of St. Peter, whose mother-in-law was ill; the disciples of Christ having interceded with Him on her behalf, the Lord commanded the fever to leave her, and she was cured, and getting up, she served them at table. The report of this miracle soon spread, and many sick and possessed persons were brought to Christ, and He gave them health.

First Point.—Consider how Christ, having taught His celestial doctrine to the synagogue, and it not having been received, He left the place as hardened and ungrateful for His benefits, and came to the house of St. Peter, which is the Church, and gave health to all the sick who were there. See and take heed of the number of mercies that the Lord has done to thee; how many times He has called thee, how much light of doctrine He has granted thee, and how little thou hast profited by them, rendering Him offences for benefits, like that ungrateful synagogue; and tremble lest He punish thee as He did it, by leaving thee forgotten; and that He does not pass on to the house of the grateful poor like St. Peter, and grant to them the graces that He had prepared for thee, cry out and lament over thy past offences, and beg of the Lord not to leave thee forgotten, but to wait for thy repentance, offering Him to amend thy ways for what remains to thee of life.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ, seeing the mother-in-law of St. Peter ill with violent fever, was not, however, moved to cure her until His disciples begged of Him to do so, at whose prayer He gave her such perfect

health that she found herself strong, and quite well ; and this was not because the Saviour was unwilling to cure her, but because He wished His disciples to have a part in this work of mercy, and in order that we should know that, though He is aware of our necessities, He waits for the prayers of the just before He draws us out of them ; from which thou hast two things to learn : (1.) To pray always to the Lord for the necessities of thy neighbours, that He may succour and remedy them ; (2.) To avail thyself of the prayers of others in thy wants, that He may have pity on thee, and draw thee out of them, being assured that in the same manner as He cured this woman of her illness at the prayer of the disciples, He will also take compassion on thee at the request of His servants, and will have mercy on thee.

Third Point.—Consider how immediately, and without delay, this holy woman, on finding herself cured, got up and served Christ and His disciples at table, showing her gratitude by employing in His service the health that God had given her ; for this has He given thee the health and the talents that thou hast received at His hands. Examine carefully whether thou employest them in the service of God, or in that of the world, and in seeking thy ease, interests, advancement, and the vanities of the age ; look back on thyself, and attend to thy duty, and offer thyself to God, dedicating all to His service with a true desire to serve Him.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the charity of Christ did not limit itself to the mother-in-law of St. Peter, but spread itself over all the poor, sick, and possessed of the city ; and learn (1.) not to limit thine to thy friends, relations, and acquaintances, but to extend it to all, and especially to the poorest and most neglected ; and (2.) being conscious of thy own wants, and of the troubles of thy soul, beg of the Lord to come to thy poor house, and cure thee of them all, as He cured the mother-in-law of St. Peter.

*SIXTY-THIRD MEDITATION.**For the same Day.*

HOW CAIPHAS AND HIS COUNCIL CONDEMNED CHRIST.
(MATT. XXVI ; MARK XIV.)

First Point.—Consider how Caiphas, seeing that Christ kept such profound silence, and did not answer any of the false accusations brought against Him, conjured Him in the name of the living God to say if He was His true Son ; the Saviour then broke silence and answered what was most opportune ; and Caiphas and all the council, blinded with the light of this answer, were moved to anger, and let loose all their rage on the Saviour of the world. Contemplate the humility of the Saviour in obeying the high priest, and in respecting the name of God, for on being interrogated in that name, He did not delay His answer, but immediately replied to the high priest, as He was asked, with extreme truth and punctuality. Learn to speak the truth to judges with all clearness whenever thou mayest be called upon by them ; and, at the example of thy Saviour, to respect the name of God from whatever mouth thou mayest hear it, even if it be as unclean and sacrilegious as that of Caiphas.

Second Point.—Consider how false and deceitful are the judgments of men, and how little trust we ought to place in them, since they condemned Christ our Lord as worthy of death, because He told them the truth ; and see, besides, how powerful flattery is with evil counsellors, because, to please the high priest, all those who composed the council agreed to his opinion, though it was so wrong ; and they did not hesitate to condemn by their votes the Author of life. Oh, madness and perversion of the sons of Adam ! how great is your ambition, since to please a mortal man you do not hesitate to condemn the Immortal One, on whom yur lives depend ! O angels of

heaven ! come down and vote in this council, and teach the world to know who is this Saviour it condemns ; but if men will not listen to truth itself when it speaks, how will they believe you or any one who tells them of it ?

Third Point.—Consider how Christ, knowing the effect that the truth would produce on those bad ministers, and the sufferings that it would bring on Himself, would not for that conceal it, but spoke it clearly for our example, that we may never, for any human respect or fear, conceal the truth when it should be manifested. Learn this lesson, and beg of the Saviour grace to say always the truth clearly when it is for His holy service.

Fourth Point.—Lay the weight of thy consideration on what here occurs. Look on Christ, and contemplate Him standing in the middle of that council, being questioned, and answering, with extreme modesty and truth, that He is the Son of God ; and see the high priest, disturbed by His answer, and so infuriated that he rent his garments, saying that He had blasphemed, and that He was worthy of death ; and all the council saying the same, without there being one contrary vote ; and see Christ, His justice trampled on and condemned, the truth availing Him nothing. O my soul ! compassionate what thy Saviour suffers for thee, and learn patience and long-suffering if thou seest thyself unjustly condemned by men ; pay not attention to their judgments, heeding only those of God, which alone are true, and appreciate all things at their real worth.

SIXTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE CONVERSION OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN.

(JOHN IV.)

Christ having arrived near to Samaria, sat down to rest beside a well where a Samaritan woman came to draw

water ; He entered into conversation with her, and converted her to His service, and she, going back to the city, gave news of Christ our Lord. Many came from the town and recognised Christ, and were converted ; and He remained two days with them, teaching them the doctrine of heaven.

First Point.—Turn thine eyes on Christ, tired, and hot, and overwhelmed with the labours of the journey, and see Him seated near a well, waiting for some one to whom He may do good. Consider what great fatigues sinners have cost Him, and how great are those which He has endured for thee, seeking thee so many years, although flying from His service ; approach to relieve Him, and give Him some rest, offering thy soul, thy life, all that thou hast and art, to employ all in His service.

Second Point.—Consider the conversation that He held with this lost woman, to rescue her soul, being anxious for her good when she was most careless of it ; lay the weight of thy consideration on those words in which He puts forth the prize of eternal life. “Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again, but he that shall drink of the water that I will give him shall not thirst for ever.” Consider how the pleasures and temporal good of the world resemble the saltish waters of a deep well which are reached at the cost of great labour, and when drunk, do not quench the thirst, but rather increase it, for he who possesses most of these delights longs for more, and the thirst for them increases with their acquisition, whilst eternal joys are easy to obtain with the help of God’s grace ; and they take away the thirst for what is temporal and earthly. Ponder over the great madness of this blind world, which takes such pains in seeking earthly, worthless, and perishable things, and yet is so forgetful of what is celestial and eternal. Turn thine eyes on thyself, dive deeply into this thought, bewail thy past blindness, and beg of the Lord grace to live undeceived, despising what is temporal and coveting only eternal goods.

Third Point.—See how the disciples were astonished

at seeing our Lord conversing with this woman, because such was not His custom ; and learn thou also to be prudent, and not to be familiar with the other sex, under any pretext ; listen to those words from the mouth of thy Saviour : “ My food is to do the will of Him who sent me ; ” for as in food is sustenance and taste, so also was that of Christ in doing the will of His father, which was to seek souls lost by sin, and bring them back to His service ; this should be thine if thou wouldst imitate Christ.

Fourth Point.—Consider the joy of this woman with the light that Christ communicated to her, for not finding room for it in her own bosom, she went and preached aloud in the city, which was moved by her words to seek Christ ; and she who had decoyed others into vice became a preacher of virtue, and many were converted by her, to the great joy of that city. O Christ, my Lord ! great is Thy goodness, and great Thy wisdom, since by Thy only word Thou changest the hardest hearts into children of Abraham, sinners into saints, and those who have scandalised the world into edifying examples, who, like this sinner, convert it by their words and works. If Thou seekest lost souls, here is mine, which is very wicked : it grieves me to have cost Thee so many fatigues, and that Thou mayest no longer tire Thyself in seeking me, I come to Thy feet, seeking Thee, renouncing and detesting my former life ; receive me, my God ; enlighten and inflame me with the fire of Thy love, that I may serve and praise Thee eternally like this converted sinner.

SIXTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

ON THE DENIAL OF ST. PETER.—(MATT. XXVI. ; MARK XIV.)

First Point.—Consider the causes of St. Peter's denial of Christ. The first of which was self-confidence, boasting that he would die sooner than renounce his Master. The second was his separating from Christ on the road in which he followed Him from afar, as the Evangelist says. The third was entering into the palace and seating himself by the fire with the soldiers. The fourth was his entering into conversation with licentious women, and thus, from one step to another, the apostle chosen to be the column of the Church fell into the abyss. Consider slowly these steps which lead to such lamentable ruin, and take the contrary ones that thou mayest not perish ; and the better to secure thyself from like ruin, learn to think humbly of thyself, following close in Christ's footsteps, without ever leaving His side, and avoiding palaces and the conversation of women.

Second Point.—Cast thine eyes on St. Peter, in the house of the high priest, seated by the fire with the soldiers, at the moment when Christ was standing bound in the same palace ; and being asked once, twice, and three times about Him, St. Peter answers and swears that he does not know Him. O Peter ! Is He so bad a man that thou art ashamed of knowing Him ? Who could believe this of St. Peter, who had confessed Christ before everybody to be the Son of the living God ! See how dangerous is the occasion, and fly it as soon as thou canst, that thou mayest not fall into sin. O Lord, hold me in Thy hand, that I may not fall into temptation ! What will become of me, so weak and miserable, when the column of the Church fell ? Learn that thou deniest Christ as often as thou disdainest or art ashamed of serv-

ing Him, and if thou art ashamed of Him, He also will be ashamed to confess thee as His before His Eternal Father.

Third Point.—Consider what the Saviour must have felt when He found Himself in this position, abandoned by His disciples, sold by one, denied by another, surrounded with enemies, and how He must have lifted up His eyes and heart to His Father, saying, Now, Lord, no one remains to me but Thee; into Thy hands I commend my spirit; do not abandon me. Here thou hast consolation in thy lonelinesses, and teaching to show thee to whom thou shouldst appeal in thy trials, that is to God our Lord, who never leaves those who do not leave Him, and who is the refuge of the neglected. Console thyself with Christ, and learn from Him to place thy confidence in God, and offer Him generously never to leave Him, but to die at His side.

Fourth Point.—Consider how, at the third denial, the cock crowed, and Peter remembered what Christ had said, that that very night before the cock crowed he would deny Him thrice; the Saviour then looked mercifully at him, piercing his heart by that look, as with a flaming dart, and Peter went out of the palace and wept bitterly over his sin. Oh, how many things thou hast here to meditate and to learn! The crow of the cock is the symbol of the preachers who, by their voice, awaken sinners who are sleeping in the darkness of sin. Beg of God to send many and very fervent preachers to awaken the world out of the lethargy in which it sleeps, and especially thy soul, so listless and forgetful of what is so important to it; and keep within sight of Christ, from whose eyes fall sparks of love and charity to inflame hearts. O Lord! look at me, and have mercy on me, for to look at me is to cure me, and to purify with Thy fire my soul and my heart. What will it cost Thee, Lord, to turn Thine eyes on me as Thou turnedst them on Peter? My need is greater than his. Let not my sins disgust Thee, since Thou comest to find sinners, of whom I am

the greatest. Take heed, also, how St. Peter went out of the palace to do penance; in it he had lost himself, and out of it he wept and washed away his sins. Go out of the palace, for it is a syren which softly enchants, and then precipitates headlong with disappointment; weep and lament bitterly with St. Peter thy sins, for if he renounced Christ three times, thou hast denied Him three thousand times, and thou hast never done the penance that thy sins require.

SIXTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY.—(JOHN VIII.)

The Scribes brought to Christ a woman taken in adultery that He might judge her; and Christ, bowing down, wrote on the earth, and then rising up again said, "He that is without sin, let him cast the first stone at her," and they all went away one by one till the woman remained alone with Christ, who said to her, "Woman, where are they that accuse thee?—go, and now sin no more."

First Point.—Cast thine eyes on this woman condemned for adultery, to be stoned by all the people, who have been assembled by the Scribes and Pharisees to execute the sentence. Consider the affliction of her heart at finding herself so near to so painful and ignominious a death. Contemplate the shame she must have endured before so large a concourse of people, the tears that must have flowed from her eyes, and how she would have given anything never to have sinned; see the terror of her soul whilst awaiting the declaration of that judgment by which she would receive life or a most bitter death. Consider, as in a mirror, what passes in the soul of a sinner before the tribunal of Christ, and what will happen

to thee when thou art called to judgment ; and see how thou wilt be in the midst of that senate, and the anguish of thy heart in the dread of the sentence, and with what great desire thou wilt then wish that thou hadst never sinned, since for so vile and momentary a pleasure thou wilt be on the point of dying eternally in most bitter torments ; beg, therefore, of God to hold thee in His hand, that thou mayest not fall into sin.

Second Point.—Consider Christ writing on the earth, according to St. Augustine, the names of those who accused her, because they were not worthy to be written in heaven, but only on earth ; and learn not to accuse thy neighbours, nor to persecute the miserable if they fall into sin, but rather compassionate them, and pray and intercede, not as the Pharisees that they may be punished, but that they may be forgiven, in order that thy name be not written like theirs on the earth, but like that of the apostles in heaven.

Third Point.—Christ said to them, that he who is without sin should stone her, teaching, as St. Gregory says, that we should first judge ourselves before our neighbours, and put our hand on our consciences to purify them from all sin before condemning others. Put thy hand on thy breast and examine thy conscience when thou hearest of or seest any defect in thy neighbour, and do not judge him or condemn him until thou hast judged thyself and purified thyself from all the dross of sin. O Lord, give me grace to look always to the honour of my neighbours, and never to condemn them, but rather let their falls serve me as an occasion to purify my own soul from all stain.

Fourth Point.—Consider the prudence with which Christ delivered this poor woman from the hands of those sanguinary wolves, and how they all went away and left her alone, but in much better company, that of the Saviour, who absolved her from her sin, and at the same time admonished her not to sin any more, showing, in the first instance, His gentleness, and in the second, as

St. Augustine says, His righteousness and truth. Consider attentively all this, and see how, if God is gentle, benign, and merciful, He is also just, and the dispenser of justice, and He loves truth. Put thyself, then, in the place of that woman, and listen to and take for thyself these words which Christ says to her: "Neither will I condemn thee; go thy way, and sin no more." This mercy the Saviour grants thee, and this advice He gives thee; ruminate slowly on His sentence, and see how thou art to execute it.

SIXTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

ON WHAT HAPPENED TO CHRIST ON THE NIGHT OF HIS
BEING A PRISONER IN THE HOUSE OF CAIPHAS.

First Point.—Consider how different were the matins sung to the Saviour that night on earth to those that the angels chanted to Him in heaven, for the executioners who guarded Him entertained themselves by mocking Him, spitting on Him, and buffeting Him, playing with Him as with a madman or a fool, quizzing Him as a mock king and a false prophet, blaspheming much against Him; it is not the time to sleep when thy Redeemer is in such continual torments, and when His enemies watch to dishonour and afflict Him with fresh grievances. O my Redeemer! what a dark and gloomy night is this on which the sun of justice is eclipsed by such spittings, buffets, and affronts. Oh, who would not willingly take up Thy defence against so many injuries, and give satisfaction to Him who is the honour of heaven and earth! Blessed be Thou who sufferedst so much for me. Angels of heaven come, and supply for my weakness and misery, and cease not to glorify my God,

that you may make up by your praises for the affronts that men, ignorant and perverse, heap on Him on earth.

Second Point.—Contemplate Christ our only good, His eyes covered with a vile and dirty cloth, His divinity thus mocked and scoffed at. They struck Him, saying: Prophecy to us who struck Thee. See the patience, fortitude, and equanimity with which He bears these affronts, as a meek lamb, without opening His lips. Grieve over His sufferings, make up by thy praises for some of that opprobrium, and pray Him that thy sins may never cover His eyes, nor be clouds that should hinder Him from looking on thee with mercy.

Third Point.—Consider, O my soul, what thou wouldst have done hadst thou found thyself in the place of the High Priest on that night, and had seen thy sweet Spouse in such a position, blasphemed, spit upon, buffeted, His beard and His hair disordered, His body discoloured by the violence of His torments; approach with reverence, and draw from the flesh of thy heart wherewith to cleanse that bruised face, and arranging those matted hairs, rejoice those bleeding eyes and soothe that Lord who is the delight of heaven and earth; prostrate thyself on thy knees, say rather with tears than words: “O sweet Jesus, great have been my sins which have worked such havoc on Thee; O Lord, how grieved I am that I have offended Thee; I have blasphemed Thee when I have made use of my tongue against those prelates and superiors who hold Thy place; I scoffed at Thee when I mocked those who serve Thee; and I spat on Thy face when I approached to receive Thee in Thy sacrament with less reverence than I ought. I am grieved at all this, and I implore Thy grace never to offend Thee more.

Fourth Point.—Consider what the seraphic doctor St. Bonaventure¹ says, namely, that the soldiers, to rest themselves, when it was past midnight, conducted our Saviour down into a small fetid cellar in which there was a broken

¹ S. Bonaventure, Med. lxxv.

column, to which they tied Him, and dividing themselves to keep their watch, those that guarded Him ceased not to deride Him and say injurious things to Him, and as the cellar had a window to the street, the people crowded there and scoffed also at Him. This was the bed of repose which was prepared for thy Spouse after so many anxieties; this was the lodging into which thou forcedst Him to enter when, on His knocking at thy doors, thou wouldst not open; at another time He complained that his head was bedewed with the night dew, now it is tortured by the blows of the soldiery, and His face is stained with their saliva. The foxes have holes, and the birds nests, but the Virgin's Son has not where to lay His head. Enter into that place to compassionate His sufferings, and offer Him thy heart on which to rest a while, and though it be harder than stone, it will be softened with the blood that flows from that innocent Lamb.

SIXTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Fourth Sunday in Lent.

ON THE MIRACLE THAT CHRIST PERFORMED IN FEEDING FIVE THOUSAND PERSONS WITH FIVE LOAVES AND TWO FISHES.—(JOHN VII.)

First Point.—Consider how the people followed Christ, attracted by the sweetness of His doctrine, and forgetful of the sustenance of their bodies whilst receiving that of their souls, and how the Lord gave them most abundantly of both, fulfilling His word when He promised to give all that was necessary for their bodies to those who first seek the kingdom of God. Learn to follow Christ our Lord, and to forget temporal things to obtain what is eternal; for if thou leave this last for the first, thou wilt

without a doubt lose all, but if thou knowest how to confide in God, thy temporal goods will be doubled, and thou wilt obtain at once both temporal and eternal advantages.

Second Point.—Consider the compassion of God, how on lifting up His eyes and seeing the necessity of that multitude which followed Him, without being besought by any one, He was at once moved to mercy and sought to relieve the people. Learn, then, from the Saviour to have pity on the poor and succour the miserable on seeing their necessity ; for it is written, that they who have mercy shall find mercy for themselves with God.

Third Point.—Follow Christ into that desert, and thou shalt be one of His guests ; enter with the multitude and contemplate what passes ; see how Christ takes the bread into His hands, how He gives thanks to His Eternal Father, how He blesses it, divides and distributes it, giving it through the hands of the Apostles to the multitude, which was seated in order ; see the benignity of the Lord, the grace and affability with which He looks on all, the pleasure with which He gives them food and that with which the people take in what they receive from His hands ; rejoice at having so good a Father, and delight in His liberality and providence ; learn to be on good terms with all, to be liberal in giving alms to the poor, and do not go away from this table without receiving one mouthful of bread from the hands of Christ.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the Saviour ordered that what was left should be gathered together, and out of so small a provision twelve baskets were filled after five thousand persons had been fed ; which remains He ordered to be given to the boy who had brought the loaves and the fish. Oh great marvel of the Most High God, and of the immense virtue of charity which multiplies in such proportions the goods of both body and soul ! Learn to confide in this bounteousness of the Lord, to give alms from the possessions that thou mayest have, and to serve God without fear that thou wilt want

for anything that is needful to thee. Lastly, consider how the people wanted to crown Christ king, but He fled from this dignity and retired alone to the mountain, giving an example to men to avoid human dignities, and not to receive recompense for the good works they perform.

SIXTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

ON THE COMPASSION AND GRIEF THAT THE BLESSED VIRGIN
ENDURED FOR CHRIST ON THE NIGHT OF HIS IMPRISON-
MENT.

First Point.—Consider how, as the seraphic doctor St. Bonaventure meditates, nothing of what Christ suffered was hidden from His most holy Mother, partly on account of what St. John told her, but more especially from the light she received from the Holy Ghost who dwelt in her ; and thus, though she was absent in body, she was present in spirit at all His martyrdoms and affronts, feeling in her soul all that Christ suffered in the body, compassionating Him, being consumed with love and desires to alleviate His sufferings, and to take them on herself that her Divine Son might not suffer them. Enter into the cenacle, see her surrounded by those holy women, who all followed her, shedding floods of tears ; unite thy grief and affliction to hers, compassionating all that she suffers.

Second Point.—Consider what the Blessed Virgin must have felt when she saw in spirit her most blessed Son a prisoner, bound and condemned, without any one to plead for Him ; and that St. Peter, in whom she might have had confidence, on being interrogated three times, denied Him as many times, saying and swearing that he knew Him not. Oh, with what a sword of grief must

¹ S. Bonaventure, Med. lxxv. in fin.

not this denial and abandonment have pierced her heart ! how she must have besought the angels and all the heavenly courtiers to come and recognise Him, as they came down when He was in the manger and confessed Him to be God ; and how she must have begged them to defend and protect Him ; and she asks the same of thee in all the occasions that may present themselves of confessing Him for thy Lord and God in opposition to the world and its delights : compassionate this lady and give her this relief, confessing Christ our Lord and Redeemer whenever occasion offers.

Third Point.—Consider what must have been the feelings of that most pious Virgin on seeing her Son subjected to such ill-treatments and affronts all that night, without being able to procure Him one moment's relief or rest ; what must have been the affliction of her heart, seeing Him whom she so cherished and loved, in such continued and dolorous torments, and how she must have lamented being unable to succour Him : compassionate her grief, keeping her company and serving her in all that thou canst ; and draw from this a lesson not to faint under the troubles that God may send thee, nor to consider thyself as abandoned by God, but rather as favoured, since He sent so many occasions of suffering and torments to those whom He loved so dearly as He did Christ and His Mother.

Fourth Point.—Consider what St. Bonaventure says, namely, that the Blessed Virgin, on this most dismal night, surrounded by a sea of sufferings, retired, like Christ, into the garden to pray, and there unfolded her heart to God, and offered Him her most holy Son and her own self to die with Him if necessary, saying, My Lord and my God, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me, and preserve my Son and Thine ; delivering Him from so bitter a death, since there are other ways of redeeming the world ; yet not my will, but Thine be done, and not as I would, but as Thou wilt and hast ordained ; and in this prayer she persevered all night, conforming

herself in all to the will of God, who, doubtless, sent her an angel to comfort her, as He did to Christ. Contemplate these affecting scenes, accompany the most pious Virgin in her prayer, and learn to conform thyself to the will of God in all adversities.

SEVENTIETH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE GOSPEL.—(JOHN II.)

Christ entered into the Temple, and seeing it profaned by those who bought and sold animals for the sacrifices, He made a scourge with His girdle, and chased them out, telling them not to turn into a house of traffic that which was a house of prayer ; and though some resisted, many others believed in Him, seeing the wonders that He wrought in confirmation of His doctrine.

First Point.—Consider how great is the respect due to the temples of God, since the sight of the profanation of that of Jerusalem caused Christ so great grief, that without waiting He endeavoured at once to purify it Himself, casting out those who bought and sold there ; learn from this the reverence thou shouldst have for the temples of God, which are houses of prayer, and beg of Him His grace duly to respect and honour them.

Second Point.—Consider the holy zeal of Christ, who did not hesitate to punish Himself those who profaned the temple of God, chasing them out of it by force, as they would not go willingly, and with them their cattle, for, as St. Thomas says, He only admits into His house those which are offered to Him in sacrifice. Learn from this zeal that which thou shouldst have for the honour of the house of God, and since He has drawn thee there,

remember that it is neither to buy nor to sell, nor to heap up temporal riches, but to sacrifice thyself to His Divine majesty, with all thy desires and appetites. Offer thyself a holocaust in the odour of suavity, and the Lord will receive thee and preserve thee in His house ; otherwise, tremble lest He should punish thee like these men, chasing thee from His house in wrath.

Third Point.—Consider that, as the Apostle says, we are all temples of the living God, in whom He has placed His image, and in whom He wishes to be adored and served. Lay thy hand on thy breast, and see whether if God was to come to the temple of thy soul He would find anything to purge it of, as He did in the material temple of Jerusalem, and do not wait for Him to take a scourge in His hand and to punish thee, but anticipate Him, purifying thy soul from all that might displease God ; dismiss all superfluous care for the things of this world, and labour only for things that are heavenly, employing thyself in prayer and the praises of the Lord.

Fourth Point.—Consider how, on seeing this action of Christ, some contradicted Him and others believed in Him ; learn from this not to be cowardly in the work that thou undertakest for the service of God, but rather persevere with patience, for at last thou wilt experience His grace, and those who will follow and assist thee will be more numerous than those who contradicted thee ; and beg of the Lord to give thee a holy zeal for His honour, and grace to persevere in His service, and not to give way before the contradictions of men.

SEVENTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

ON THE COUNCIL ASSEMBLED BY THE SCRIBES TO CONDEMN CHRIST.—(MATT. XXVI. ; LUKE XXII.)

First Point.—Consider how in the morning a council was assembled of priests, Scribes, and Pharisees, who were the learned and esteemed of the people, and they tried the cause of the Saviour, to authorise His condemnation, as coming from persons of such high reputation, which was one of the greatest affronts that Christ suffered, as Pilate remarked to Him, alleging that the priests and ecclesiastics of His own nation, who would consider Him as belonging to them, were those who had sentenced, condemned, and delivered Him up; compassionate thy Saviour, and if thou shouldst suffer without cause from those who should protect thee, console thyself and take strength from His example, to be patient and to trust in God.

Second Point.—Consider how ready these men were to assemble to condemn Christ, and be ashamed at seeing how slow and negligent thou art in the things of His service; notice how those who contended one against the other for honours and dignities, united together against the Saviour of the world, and see how natural it is to the wicked to associate for evil; fly their councils, and be suspicious of their meetings, for they all tend to evil, and none are for good.

Third Point.—Enter by consideration into this council, and see Christ standing bound like a culprit, and the Scribes, seated as His judges, questioning Him in order to calumniate Him; listen how they ask Him if He be the Son of God, and how He, with all modesty, answers the truth, and confesses that He is, and for this confession they condemn Him as worthy of death, without one

vote being made against it. O most unjust judges and council in which Satan presides! Christ knew well what would be the result of His confession; but He did not for that neglect to speak the truth, that thou mightest learn not to hide it or be silent when it is right to speak, and to confess the Saviour even if it be at the cost of thy life. Ask His grace to follow His example, and do not rely on the judgment of men since they are so erroneous.

Fourth Point.—Consider how, amidst all these men so learned in the laws, there was not one found to defend the truth and innocence of the Saviour, because powerless innocence may be compared to the eyes obscured by the dust of passion; learn to esteem more highly true virtue than great learning, when this is not accompanied by the Spirit of God. All these men erred as blind and only moved by their envy, and condemned truth as falsehood, and innocence as sin.

SEVENTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE GOSPEL.—(JOHN VII.)

Whilst Christ was preaching and teaching in the Temple to the great admiration of all, the Jews opposed Him, ridiculing Him as an ignorant man, and saying that He was possessed; to which He replied by declaring who He was, and that His doctrine came from His heavenly Father. They, confounded by His answer, tried to lay hands on Him, but He did not allow them,¹ as His time was not yet come.

First Point.—Consider how, when Christ was preaching in the Temple, those who heard Him admired Him but were not converted, by which they multiplied their

¹ St. Augustine.

sin, since His doctrine, being so admirable, yet they did not conform to it, and possessed with envy, they wished to take His life. Weep over the hardness of men and their obstinacy in sin, for we see now in many the same vice as in those who praise the sermons they hear as admirable but are not converted by them, and rather are hardened yet more in their sins; and see that thou be not one of these. Enter into account with thyself, and consider how many instructions thou hast heard in the course of thy life, and how little thou hast profited by them. Beg pardon of God, and grace to amend.

Second Point.—Consider what the Evangelist says, that they were full of wonder at seeing Him so learned without having ever studied, from which, as St. Chrysostom says, they must have seen clearly His divinity, and that His doctrine was from God, since it was not acquired by human means like that of men, but celestial and divine, and worthy of the Son of God; from which thou shouldst draw a great esteem for the doctrine of the Saviour, and high appreciation of all His words, recognising that they come from God, and that His wisdom is not human but Divine. Rejoice to have such a Master, beg of Him to teach thee, and to give thee Divine light to understand His doctrine, and to travel by His counsels to heaven.

Third Point.—Consider those words which the Saviour spoke to those who contradicted Him: "If any man will do the will of Him (that is, of My Father), he shall know of the doctrine," giving them to understand, as St. Chrysostom expresses it, that they did not understand it, because they were possessed by their vices, and did not do the will of God, but their own. Meditate these words, and see that thy soul be not obscured by the mist of vice and unconquered passions, or by self-love, contrary to the law of the Spirit and to the will of God; and that thou be not thus prevented from knowing His truths, and penetrating the Spirit which His doctrine contains. Labour with the Divine grace to do the will of God, and to purify thy soul from vice, and God will give thee light

that the eyes of thy soul, being cleansed, thou mayest see His truths, and comprehend His doctrine.

Fourth Point.—Consider the malice of the Jews, who, blinded by so much light, threw themselves into so horrible a crime as to take away the life of the Redeemer of the world. Into this vice all those fall who take occasion of sermons to turn against the preacher who speaks in the name of Christ. Pray to God, our Lord, to hold thee in His hand that thou mayest not fall into a like sin, and do not be intimidated if thou be persecuted for saying the truth, for God will be on thy side, as He was on that of Christ, and He will not allow any one to lift his hand against thee.

SEVENTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

ON THE PERDITION OF JUDAS.—(MATT. XXVI.)

First Point.—Consider how the Evangelist says that Judas, seeing that Christ was condemned to death by the council, was grieved at his sin, and went to the priests and said to them: I sinned by selling the blood of the Just; and they answered him disdainfully, saying: Look thou to it; and Judas threw down the money that they had given him, and hung himself on a tree.

Second Point.—Consider the miserable end of this unhappy man, and how, whereas he might now be glorified in heaven and on earth like the other apostles, his soul is in hell in horrible torments, and on earth his name is the most infamous and hated of names. This is what the disciples of Christ gain when they leave and sell Him for temporal interests and delights. Unhappy fate of this miserable man, and no less lamentable is that of those who, being at the school of Christ, exchange it for that of the world and for temporal goods. Lord, hold me in

Thy hand, that I may not separate myself from Thee, nor abandon Thee in the least point, and that I may rather die the most fearful death than leave Thee.

Third Point.—Consider the repentance of his heart for the sin committed; and though he had not true sorrow, yet he knew the evil that he had done in selling his Divine Master, and he wished that he had never done it. See how true is what Origen tells us, that the devil facilitates the commission of sins, hiding from men their grievousness, and making them appear light when they are very great, and then, when repentance comes, he paints them so as to inspire despair of the mercy of God, as he did with Judas; from which thou shouldst draw for thy instruction not to rely on his wiles, nor to give credit to his words, but to be always on thy guard not to follow his call nor to fall into his meshes.

Fourth Point.—Consider the error of this unfortunate man, when he saw his sin, in having recourse to the priests of the Temple instead of to the High Priest Christ, our Redeemer, who was so near to him, and who would have forgiven him if he had approached His divine feet, as He had forgiven St. Peter that very night. O miserable man! how great is thine error in addressing thyself to those who cannot pardon thee; there thou hast the Author of life, the Lamb of God, who forgives the sins of the world—approach His feet; for if thou truly repentest He will forgive thee. O Lord! what must not have been Thy grief at seeing Thine Apostle leaving Thee, the Fountain of living water, for the marshes of those evil priests! Give me Thy grace, that I may come to Thy divine feet for the pardon of my sins, and that I may do worthy penance for them, in order to deserve to receive from Thy all-powerful hand the pardon of my offences.

Fifth Point.—Consider how Judas threw down the money, and did not profit by it, because what is ill-gotten never profits any one; and the priests took it and used it to purchase a field for the burial of strangers, because it

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was the price of the blood of Christ ; in which is shown that His precious blood was the price of our redemption, and that Christ allowed Himself to be sold in order to deliver us from bondage, and to buy eternal rest for those who sojourn in this world. Of these thou art one, and He had thee then in His mind. Give Him thanks for so great a benefit, and beg of Him to give thee help to profit by the price of His inestimable blood, and to leave the bondage of Satan, never more to return to his chains.

SEVENTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE MAN BORN BLIND.—(JOHN IX.)

Jesus, whilst passing through a street, met a poor man, blind from his birth ; and making mud with His saliva, and putting it on the man's eyes, He cured him. The Scribes tried to hide this miracle, but they were not able ; and though they ill-treated the poor man, and insulted him by sending him out of the synagogue, he was constant in confessing the truth, and recognising Christ as the author of his cure.

First Point.—Consider that it was not by chance that this man was blind, or that Christ met him in the street, but Divine Providence so disposed it for the manifestation of God's glory in Him, as Christ said. Meditate on the judgments and decrees of God in sending men infirmities and troubles, and allowing them to be overwhelmed with them for many years, as He did with regard to this man, blind from his birth, until the hour comes when the Lord pleases to show forth His power and providence by giving them health : and be not cast down at the sight of the troubles that He sends thee, nor

consider thyself forgotten by His providence, for it is not so, but rather hope in the Lord, and beg of Him to look at thee as He did at the blind man, for looking on thee and curing thee will all be one, as it was with him.

Second Point.—Consider the mysterious manner in which Christ gave sight to this blind man, which was not, as with the one of Jericho, condescending in one word to his prayers, but by making mud with His saliva and the dust of the earth, and putting it on his eyes, and sending him to wash himself in the fountain of Siloe ; by which He teaches thee the means that thou shouldst make use of to arise from the blindness of thy soul caused by sin, which are to avail thyself of the interior saliva of the assistance and grace of Christ, without which no one can shake off his sins, and to put before thine eyes, as St. Bonaventure says, the earth of which we were formed, and our miseries and weaknesses, to know and weep over them, and then to wash thyself at the fountain of confession from the stains contracted by sins. In this manner we shall recover our sight, and shall return to Christ, as this blind man did ; enter into account with thyself, and see in what state thou art, and beg of God grace to abandon sin, and to obtain the life of thy soul.

Third Point.—Consider the persecution that was raised against the blind man on account of his having recovered his sight. When he was blind, all gave him alms, and did good to him ; and on his obtaining sight they turn against him ; but his constancy in confessing Christ conquered them, for the wages that the servants of the Lord obtain for the spiritual life that they receive, in order to know and despise the vanity of the world, are buffets, affronts, and persecutions, in all of which they must be firm, without falling away in the least point from His holy service. Take example by this blind man ; see how the Saviour favoured and protected him ; and prepare thyself for the fight that thou wilt have to engage with the world by enlisting under His banner,

for if thou be faithful in fighting, God will always be on thy side, and thou wilt conquer.

Fourth Point.—Consider how those who had known this blind man did not recognise him after he had received his sight from the hands of Christ, and doubted whether he could be the same, so changed was he since Christ had laid His hands on him. Thus should a man be changed when God does him the mercy of giving him His light and knowledge to arise from the blindness of the world, so that he may appear quite different, and totally change his life from a bad one to a good one, and each day into a better. Consider slowly what takes place in thyself, how many mercies God has done thee, and how little altered thou art for the better; weep over thy carelessness, and beg of the Lord grace to make amends in what remains to thee of life for all that thou hast lost in the past.

SEVENTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

HOW CHRIST WAS HANDED OVER BY THE COUNCIL TO
PILATE THE PRESIDENT.

First Point.—The Evangelist says that, early in the morning, and shortly after the conclusion of the council, Christ was handed over to Pilate the president, as to the secular power, to be treated according to the law. Consider how it is not without mystery that the Evangelist says that it was early in the morning, that thou mayest know that Christ suffered for thee at all hours—in the afternoon, at night, in the morning, and at mid-day; and as men offend Him at all hours, He suffers for them also at all times, in order that thou mayest always praise Him, and show Him thy gratitude, not forgetting His

torments, and how much He suffered for love of thee at all hours of the day.

Second Point.—Accompany Christ in this station from the council of the Jews to the Pretorium of Pilate ; apply thy senses to all that takes place, thine eyes to see the modesty of the Saviour, and the fortitude and gravity which He ever exhibited ; and thy ears to hear the accusations that are brought against Him. Contemplate that profound silence that He preserves whilst hearing so many testimonies against Himself ; take note of those fettered hands which could in one instant have annihilated all His enemies ; enter by consideration into the interior of His breast, and see that heart so constant and that will so united with that of the Eternal Father, and that love which burns in His breast for the salvation of men, for whom He is silent, and suffers, refusing to defend Himself and allowing Himself to be condemned. Give Him thanks for all, and learn the virtues that He teaches by this lesson.

Third Point.—Consider the accusations brought against the Saviour, namely, that He excited the people, forbad the paying of the tribute to Cæsar, and that He called Himself Christ and King without being so ; all which was false, for He was an angel of peace for all, He taught the people to give to Cæsar that which was Cæsar's ; and being the Son of God and King of the universe, He made Himself the servant of men. Humble thyself in His presence, seeing how He is silent, and beg His grace to suffer patiently any offence that may be done thee.

Fourth Point.—Lay the stress of thy consideration on all that has been said, and learn from the humility of the Saviour to give way to thy superiors, judges, and prelates, to bear with patience to be judged by them, since Christ submitted and humbled Himself to those who had no jurisdiction over Him. Learn also to suffer silently when false testimony is brought against thee, since Christ suffered the like. Take courage from His

example, not only to be long-suffering, but also joyful in thy trials, since He makes thee participate in His passion, and renders thee worthy like His apostles to endure imprisonment and contumely for His love. Do not lose sight of Him, and thou wilt not fall; offer thyself to suffer with Him, and in His company, and He will assist thee to be constant and to deserve His crown.

SEVENTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE SON OF THE WIDOW OF NAIM WHOM CHRIST
RESTORED TO LIFE.—(LUKE VII.)

When Christ was arrived at the city of Naim, the funeral of a young man went out of the gate, and the mother was following it in tears, accompanied by the people; Christ ordered the bearers to stop, and told the mother not to weep; He spoke to the dead man as if he were alive, ordered him to arise; the young man obeyed, arose, and spoke, and Christ gave him back to his mother, and all glorified God for so great a wonder.

First Point.—See this young man in the flower of youth, the only son of his mother, rich, surrounded by relations and friends, dead and bound with a winding-sheet, being carried to the tomb, and neither his age, or property, or relations, or friends, are of any avail to him. Consider in him a portrait of human fragility. Look at thyself steadily in this mirror, and contemplate how little mortal things are worth, and how useless it is to trust in any created thing, and how this life passes like a breath, and the most flourishing man is withered in a day and reduced to the tomb; and learn to undeceive thyself in order to journey by the light of these truths to true and eternal life, despising all that is earthly,

perishable, and deceitful, appreciating only that which is eternal.

Second Point.—Turn thine eyes on this dead man and on the mother who weeps, and see in him the image of thy soul dead by sin, and thy mother the Church weeping over thee. He was wrapped up in a rich winding-sheet, according to the custom of the Jews, and thy soul is in thy body which thou dost adorn and regale. The mother and relations of the young man wept over him, but he, being dead, wept not for himself; take heed that the like be not thy case, lest whilst all weep over thee thou be so dead as alone to ignore thy peril and to be unmoved by thy own misfortune. He was carried to the sepulchre to be the food of worms in that narrow dwelling-place so full of horror and darkness; thou art carried on the wings of time, which never pauses, to the profound sepulchre of hell, that dark and horrible place, where thou wilt be the food of demons who, like angry dragons, are always tormenting the damned. Look at that youth, and consider what would have become of him if God had not recalled him to life, and what will become of thee if thou dost not return to the life of grace; weep over thy misfortune, and beg all good and holy people to weep over it with thee, and pray the Lord to recall thee to the life of His Divine grace.

Third Point.—Consider the circumstances of this resurrection and the means by which Christ restored this youth to life, which were as follows:—He touched the bier in which they carried him, spoke to him, and he arose and began to speak, and Christ restored him alive to his mother. These same circumstances occur spiritually in the resurrection of the sinner dead to the life of grace. God touches him, knocking at the door of his heart, speaks to him, and the sinner hears Him, arises from sin and begins to speak, when he confesses his sin, and God restores him to the Church his mother. Remember how often Christ has knocked at the door of thy heart, and how many times He has called to thee to

arise from the vices in which thou livest and to amend thy life, and thou hast been deaf to His voice. The dead hear the voice of God and obey, and thou neither hearest nor obeyest, nor dost thou arise from thy guilt, and for that reason thou remainest dead in thy sins; thou art reputed alive by men, and in the sight of God thou art dead. Weep over thy guilt and arise, return to the Lord, and beg His grace to serve Him.

Fourth Point.—Consider the joy of the mother and that youth at seeing the new life that Christ had given him, and listen to all the people proclaiming the praises of Christ, and giving Him repeated thanks for the mercy that He had done the dead man; and recognise the joy of a soul when it arises from the death of sin and is restored from the life of grace; the praises that the angels sing to God, and the feast that is celebrated in heaven for its resurrection, and see what will be done on thy account if thou be converted to God our Lord, and also for other sinners if they return to Him. Beg of His Divine Majesty to extend His hand and to give it thee, that thou mayest arise from sin, and also to extend it to all the other sinners of the world, and to draw them also from the darkness of their sins, and beg of the angels to help thee with their prayers and petitions to obtain this grace of the Lord, for the honour and glory of His Divine Majesty.

SEVENTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

HOW PILATE EXAMINED CHRIST, AND WHAT PASSED BETWEEN THEM.—(MATT. XXVII.; LUKE XXIII.)

First Point.—Consider how Pilate, having heard the accusations brought against Christ, retired alone with Him and examined Him, and listened to what He had to

say concerning the crimes that were imputed to Him ; and having heard Him, Pilate said to the people that he found no guilt whatsoever in Him, and though, as a bad judge, he did ill in not following the truth, he did well in hearing the Saviour, and not sentencing Him on the only word of the Jews ; from which thou shouldst learn not to rely entirely on the reports of others, especially when they are prejudiced as in this case, but keep one ear for the other side, and condemn no one without hearing him. See how this judge, on hearing Christ, declared that He was unjustly accused, and believe that often, on hearing the opposite side, thou wilt see that he who is accused as guilty is in truth innocent.

Second Point.—Consider Christ showing forth in His Divine Person His usual gravity and moderation, bound and a prisoner before Pilate, who interrogates Him as to His kingdom, and He answers that it is not of this world but of the next, and that He has come to declare the truth, and to give testimony of it ; and having asked what is the truth, Pilate left Him without awaiting an answer. Meditate on this answer of Christ's, and be not like this bad judge who did not wait to hear the truth ; listen to what the Saviour says, that His kingdom is not of this world, and thus thou art not to look for it here but in the next. There thou art to seek it, lift thine eyes to heaven and contemplate that celestial kingdom in which Christ reigns with all His court, see how His words were fulfilled, and His Passion being quickly passed, He reigns, and will for ever reign, in glory ; meditate this and the truths that the Saviour spoke on this occasion, and raise up thy spirit and thy desires to follow and serve Him in this world, in order to deserve to enjoy Him in His celestial kingdom.

Third Point.—Pilate went out to the people, and said to them that he found in Christ no cause for condemning Him to death ; and they accused Him of having preached and excited the people by the miracles that He had performed. O good Jesus ! those to whom Thou hast done

good, those who were of Thy people and blood, and in whom Thou mightest have had some confidence that they would defend Thee, these accuse Thee, whilst those who were strangers to Thee, and had received fewer benefits from Thy hands, excuse Thee and confess publicly that they find in Thee no cause of sin. O Lord, who will confide in relations and earthly friends after seeing Thine do so much against Thee? In Thee I shall find consolation, my God, when doing good evil is thought of me, and I am accused for the works that I do in Thy service; since I see that those holy actions which Thou performedst are brought against Thee as crimes.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Pilate returned a second time to Christ and told Him to answer the accusations brought against Him, and Christ kept profound silence and did not answer any one of them; in such manner that the president admired extremely His patience, humility, and meekness, and tried yet harder to deliver Him. Such was the patience of Christ, that it excited admiration and esteem even in the Gentiles. Meditate on it thou also, and rejoice at having a Master so full of invincible patience that He subdues by it the unbelievers; and learn how much more powerful to melt the hearts of enemies is patience and silence under insults, than an answer however much to the purpose. Beg of the Lord to grant thee this virtue, and grace to suffer in silence when injury is done thee.

SEVENTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE RESURRECTION OF LAZARUS.—(JOHN XI.)

Lazarus being ill, his sister sent warning thereof to Christ, who delayed two days, and when He arrived,

Lazarus had been buried two days: Jesus went to his tomb, and there He wept, groaned in spirit, and prayed; and having ordered the stone to be removed from the entrance of the tomb, He called to Lazarus, who came forth alive, and his bandages being removed, he returned to his house, and many believed in Christ on account of this miracle.

First Point.—Consider how, as soon as Lazarus fell ill, his sisters sent word to Christ, saying, “He whom Thou lovest is sick;” in which thou shouldst meditate the haste of these holy sisters in calling on the Saviour in their troubles, and asking Him for a remedy, for He is the sovereign doctor to whom we should all appeal for help in our wants. Consider also that they do not ask Him to come and cure Lazarus, nor that, from where He was, He should command the sickness to leave him, as He did for the centurion, but only that He should know it, not indeed that He could be ignorant of it, but to manifest their faith and the confidence they had in His pity, and that they wished for no other doctor than Him. Learn to do the same in thy troubles, and always to put thy confidence in God, and to place thyself before His Divine Majesty that He may look at thee with eyes of mercy, and He will have pity on thee. Take note also of those words, “He whom Thou lovest is sick;” Thy friend, he whom Thou treated as such, is sick, for thus God treats those whom He loves; and if thou be in sickness and trouble, and in circumstances which exercise thy patience, believe that these are signs which God gives thee of the love He has for thee; like Lazarus, receive them as such, and beg His grace to bear them with patience for His love.

Second Point.—Consider how our Lord, having received the letter of Martha and Mary, did not go at once to console them and restore the health of their brother, but rather delayed His visit until Lazarus died and was buried; on the one hand to try their faith and give them an opportunity for greater merit, and on the other to

manifest His glory in resuscitating the dead ; for, as St. Ambrose says, if He had not allowed Lazarus to die, He could not have restored him to life, nor have done them all so great a favour as to bring him back to this world after having been dead four days. Be not discouraged if God does not grant thee at once what thou askest of Him ; for if He delays, it is to show His glory and to multiply His favours when, to all human wisdom, what thou seekest appears as impossible, as to give health to Lazarus dead and rotting in the tomb.

Third Point.—Consider the words that Christ spoke to His disciples when He received the letter of the sisters of Lazarus : “ Lazarus our friend sleepeth ; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep ; ” because the death of the friends of God is a soft sleep and a sweet repose, taken for a short time, from which they awake with fresh life and permanent health, such as was this death of Lazarus, from which he awoke after four days with better health than he had before ; but the death of the wicked is an eternal torment, without appeal or remedy to recover life. Ponder this in thy heart, and since thou must of necessity die, from this day so dispose thy life that thy death may be a sleep and a rest, and not an eternal torment.

Fourth Point.—Travel with the Saviour to the house of Martha and Mary ; see and contemplate all that takes place there for the good of thy soul ; how the sisters went out to receive Him ; the affability with which Christ spoke to them ; the relations and friends who accompanied the sisters, weeping ; how Christ inquired for Lazarus, and they conducted Him to his tomb ; how He ordered the stone to be taken away, though He could have resuscitated him without so doing, but He wished to give them a share in the miracle for their greater merit, and to teach us to relieve the burdens of the dead as much as we can, by praying for them ; see how they remove the stone and discover to sight that darksome tomb full of putrefaction ; the covering being thus removed, see thyself in that mirror, and remember how

soon thou wilt see thyself in the society of the dead ; rest thine eyes with attention on Christ, see how He is troubled, how He grieves and weeps, and do not allow His precious tears to fall to the ground ! O Lord ! why weepest Thou when Thou art going to restore him to life ? For that very reason, says St. Jerome, because He saw Himself obliged by the prayers of the sisters to restore Lazarus to the perils and calamities of this life ; by which thou canst judge how much better and more enviable is the lot of those who have left this world than that of those still in it ; or if thou wilt meditate, as St. Peter Chrysologus says, that Christ wept because out of so many dead He was about to resuscitate only one, and thus He called him by his name, "Lazarus, come forth," and he immediately came out. Consider, therefore, that if the Redeemer regretted so deeply not to restore to life the other dead persons, that He wept tears over them, how great must be His grief to leave so many sinners as there are in the world dead and buried in their vices ? Weep thou also with thy Saviour, and beg of Him to call them as He did Lazarus ; to call thee also, and not to permit thee to remain dead and in sin, but rather to restore thee to a new life, spiritual and holy, which may be a pledge of eternal life.

SEVENTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

HOW PILATE SENT CHRIST TO HEROD.

First Point.—Consider how the Jews, seeing the president desirous to deliver Christ, accused Him with greater violence, bringing new and stronger testimony against Him, to all of which the Saviour answered not any more than that at the first. Contemplate that multitude

of people, amongst which there must have been many of those whom He had cured and delivered from evil spirits, of those who had been witnesses of His miracles, of those whom He nourished in the desert with five loaves and two fishes; and all were struck dumb by fear of the Jews, and allowed that most innocent Lamb to suffer and be condemned. Grieve over His abandonment, offer thyself to His service, and be grateful to Him, even to the giving of thy life for His love.

Second Point.—Consider how Pilate, on hearing that Christ was a Galilean, and having recognised His innocence, yet not feeling courage to do Him justice, yielded to the clamour of the people, sent the Saviour to King Herod as a prisoner of his jurisdiction, to be judged by him, in which he did our Lord a great insult; first, in not judging His cause when it was his place to do so; and secondly, in sending Him a prisoner from one tribunal to another with such ignominy. O my soul! what a journey hast thou here to make with thy sweet Spouse! See Him abandoned by all human favour, surrounded by accusers, constables, and executioners, who drag Him along the middle of the streets, with loud shouts, to the palace of Herod, towards which He wends His way without opening His lips, or defending Himself, or complaining of the injuries done to Him. Oh, the immense patience of thy God! Oh, immense malice of perverse men, who thus treat and ill-use innocence itself! O Lord, would that I could deliver Thee, and put myself in Thy bonds, that Thou mightest find some relief, and that Thou shouldst not endure such ignominies as Thou sufferedst for my love!

Third Point.—Contemplate what the seraphic doctor St. Bonaventure says,¹ namely, that at this point the Holy Virgin and St. John, with the holy women who accompanied them, were in sight of Pilate's house, and saw and heard what took place, and how Christ was dragged with fury from the presence of the

¹ S. Bonaventure, Med. lxxvi.

governor by the people, who blasphemed and struck Him hard blows to make Him move on. Contemplate the grief of the most compassionate Virgin at that moment, the tears of the holy disciple and of the pious women, their sighs and sobs at seeing the beloved of their heart ill-treated and dragged along in chains, without being able to help Him. Approach the Blessed Virgin, and gather up her tears, beg of her to admit thee into her society, and cease not to serve her, to accompany and console her, and to compassionate her pains as far as thou art able ; enter into the interior of her heart, and take note of the colloquies she there holds with God at this time, and of her conformity to His holy will ; and learn of her how thou shouldst conduct thyself in thy trials.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the Evangelist says that Christ, being brought before Herod, the latter was very glad to see Him, because, having heard of His great miracles, he had for a long time desired to know and hear Him, and to see some of the marvels that He wrought. Notice how far from being fulfilled were the desires of this king to see and hear Christ, whilst he might so easily have satisfied himself when the Saviour preached daily and publicly in the streets and synagogues ; and for not having done so he was despised, and the Saviour spoke not a word to him on this occasion. Tremble, lest God should close His mouth and cease to speak to thee, because thou dost not profit by His inspirations by what He says to thy heart, and by the desires He gives thee. Examine thy conscience, and see how numerous these have been, and how many thou hast, like Herod, allowed to pass by unheeded ; and fear, lest thou be punished as he was. Beg of the Lord grace to amend, and not to be forgotten in punishment of thy sins.

EIGHTIETH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE GOSPEL.—(JOHN VIII.)

Christ said to the Jews that He was the Light of the world, and that those who follow Him walk not in darkness but in light, and the Light of life; and the Pharisees, offended at this doctrine, opposed Him by many calumnies, to which Christ answered with modesty; and though they tried to lay hands on Him, it was not permitted them to do so, because the hour had not yet come in which He had determined to suffer.

First Point.—Consider with how much reason Christ calls Himself the Light; because without Him all is darkness and sin and the blindness of vice; and from Him proceeds, as from its source, the light of knowledge, and from knowledge the love of the will and the grace of holy desires, which are as the seeds of the good works by which we deserve heaven. Consider thyself, and see in what darkness thou hast always walked, whenever thou hast separated thyself from this Light, and approach Jesus that He may enlighten thee and guide thee in the way to the beatitude of glory.

Second Point.—Consider that, as the venerable Bede says, Christ calls Himself not only light, but *the Light of the world*, not of heaven or of the angels, who according to their nature do not require it to guide them, but of men who travel in this dark valley of the world; to enlighten whom Christ came down from heaven, and whom He, like a resplendent sun, enlightens with His doctrine. Consider also, with St. Chrysostom, that Christ is the Light of the world, because He illuminates it all, and no man who wishes to receive it is shut out from His light. Beg of the Lord not to leave thy soul in darkness, since He shines on all men who come into the world, but

rather to give thee a ray of His Divine light, wherewith to inflame thee in His love, that thou mayest be wholly employed in His service.

Third Point.—Learn from the Saviour to be for thy neighbours a light in the world, enlightening them according to thy position with the light of doctrine and of good example; being a light to all equally, and without choosing anyone in particular; being charitable to all, as the sun that shines equally on all. Place before thine eyes thy Redeemer, and contemplate His life, and how He went through it, illuminating the people, teaching all, doing good to all, without any exception of persons; and follow His footsteps, without losing sight of Him, for whosoever follows Him walks not in darkness but in the light of life.

Fourth Point.—Consider the rest of the Gospel, and how the Pharisees, blinded by this light, turned against Christ and tried to take away His life; and be not discouraged if thou makest enemies for thyself by speaking the truth. See how God defended Christ, and be confident that He will defend thee also; take heed of the manner in which they contradicted Him, saying that His testimony was false, because it turned to His own praise. Consider how self-praise is ever badly received, and never say anything which turns to thine own praise or honour. And lastly, ponder what Christ said to them, that they were carnal and judged as such, according to the passion that moved them, and thus their judgments were erroneous, as are ever those made according to the flesh and not according to the spirit. Lay thy hand on thy heart and see how thou judgest, and what spirit directs thy opinions, and do not allow thyself to be governed by sensuality, that thou mayest not fall into the same errors as did the Pharisees, in so erroneously judging of Christ.

*EIGHTY-FIRST MEDITATION.**For the same Day.*

ON WHAT TOOK PLACE IN THE PALACE OF HEROD.
(LUKE XXIII.)

First Point.—Consider what a good occasion was here offered to Christ to save Himself from death, and to obtain honour and greatness in this world by gaining, as He could easily have done, the favour of the king, a thing so appreciated and sought by men ; and Christ despised all this so entirely that He answered not a word to Herod ; teaching us what small value we should set on human interest, even though it be with kings and princes of the earth, for all these things are vain, and frequently give occasion to sins, jealousies, and tragedies, and thus showing us that interest with God is alone worthy of our esteem, being alone solid and true. Turn thine eyes on thyself, and see the delusion in which thou hast lived, seeking the favour and esteem of men, and neglecting that of God, in contradiction to what Christ teaches ; begin afresh and change thine ambition, for in following Christ thou wilt find security.

Second Point.—See thy Saviour in the presence of Herod, standing bound, His head uncovered, His eyes cast down, His countenance grave, silent, without opening His mouth ; His enemies meanwhile accusing Him of various crimes, whilst the king waits anxiously to hear some word from Him ; but Christ spoke not, for He knew that Herod would not profit by what He said. O immense bounty of Christ ! O infinite patience ! grant me, Lord, to learn from Thy teaching to keep silence when it is right so to do ; here I will remain, my God, seeing what happens to Thee in this palace, and learning the deep lesson that Thou reatest to me by Thy silence, and which Thou teachest without opening Thy lips.

Third Point.—Hear Herod urgently begging of Christ to perform some miracle there in his presence, or at least to preach some sermon or to change water into wine, as He had done before; the Saviour remains there silent, as if He heard not, and despises his petitions and the offers of liberty that he makes; teaching us by this example that spiritual things are not for the amusement of princes, and that it is wrong to make of them food for curiosity; but that they are only for the glory of God our Lord, which we should always prefer before all human honour and interest.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Herod, annoyed at the little notice that Christ took of him and of his offers, judged Him to be mad; and as the word of the king has the force of law, and flattery is so powerful, all his palace judged the same, and with one voice declared Christ to be a madman, without intelligence or judgment, and, as such, dressed Him in the white garment of the insane; and they mocked and scoffed at Him. O angels! how could you suffer this? how was it that you came not to defend the wisdom of the Father and that of your Master, from whom you learnt all that you know? Oh, madness of the world which treats as wise the fools who follow its vanities, and as foolish those most wise men who despise them because they know their worth! See, O my soul, into what a depth of contumely thy Saviour has fallen, since, being wisdom itself, He is taken for and publicly treated as a madman. How canst thou now complain when the world esteems thee in little? for it can never treat thee worse than it did thy Redeemer and Master. Imitate His prudence, which is true wisdom, and despise that of the world, which is mere folly. Compassionate Him, and take to heart His honour, publishing Him to be what in truth He is—the Wisest of the wise, and the Light of the world.

EIGHTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For Passion Sunday.

ON THE GOSPEL.—(ST. JOHN VIII.)

This Gospel contains a question which Christ made of His own accord to the priests of the law, and to which they could make no answer, but took occasion therefrom to insult Him; and they even went so far as to try and stone Him; but the Lord left them, and went out of the Temple.

First Point.—Consider how Christ, being holiness itself, justifies Himself in the opinion of men from the stain of sin; and He alone could say: “*Which of you shall convince me of sin?*” in order that thou mayest see what a great evil sin is, since Christ did not allow even the least shade of it to rest on His reputation; and thou shouldst not allow the least shadow to rest on thine either, or at least not on thy soul. Take note of the words of Christ, and see if thou couldst say them, and lay thyself out thus to be examined by thine enemies. Purify thy soul from all sin, and beg of the Lord grace not to fall into any henceforward, and rather to die a thousand times than offend Him.

Second Point.—Meditate the words of thy Redeemer, and consider them as addressed to thyself: “If I say the truth to you, why do you not believe me? He that is of God heareth the words of God,” and he who is not listeneth not. Look into thy conscience and see how many truths Christ has spoken to thy heart, and how few thou hast put in practice; forgetting them and despising them as though thou believedst not. Ponder for thy good the opinion Christ must have of thee for having despised His truth, and turned a deaf ear to His voice; beg His pardon, and dispose thy soul to receive His truths, and to show that thou dost by putting them

in practice, and by publishing them with courage whenever it may be useful for His holy service.

Third Point.—Consider the effect that the truth of Christ had on these bad priests, since they turned against Him, calling Him a Samaritan and a man possessed by a devil; and they took stones to stone Him. Oh, profound malice of men, which turns honey into poison, and the words of life into deadly venom. Take warning by their example, and beg of God that the malice of thy heart may not be like that of the priests, who drew poison from the words of life, and that thou mayest never turn against those who warn or reprehend thee for thy sins, as they turned against Christ; but rather that, profiting by their words, thou mayest obtain the fruit of eternal life.

Fourth Point.—Consider, with St. Gregory, the meekness of Christ, who being blasphemed did not blaspheme, and being ill-treated, bore the scoffs, and answered with perfect gentleness and humility, "I have not a devil," but I honour and glorify my Father; and the priests, attempting to stone Him, He did not defend Himself, but left them, removing from His enemies the occasion of committing that sin. O meek Lamb! be a thousand times blessed for Thy humility and patience, grant me grace to imitate these virtues, learning to be meek and humble of heart, silent and long-suffering in my afflictions, as Thou art in thine.

EIGHTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

HOW CHRIST WAS SENT BACK BY HEROD TO PILATE.

First Point.—Consider how Herod, having despised Christ as a madman, sent Him back to Pilate dressed in

the white dress or gown, which was long and full, and covered His feet, and, as the Saviour had His hands tied, He could not raise it, and was, therefore, compelled to tread on it and stumble and fall very often, sometimes in the mud, at others on the stones, hurting His forehead and covering His face with mud, at which the executioners who raised Him laughed, and, profiting by the circumstance, they pushed Him that He might fall, and they dragged Him and ill-treated Him in every way, and the rumour that Herod had declared Him mad getting among the people, they whistled at Him and shouted names at Him, covering Him at the same time with dirt that they picked up from the street. O my soul ! how much hast thou not here to meditate and to weep over. See what thy sins have caused, for thy folly thy sweet Spouse the Lord of Wisdom is treated as a madman, for the care thou takest of thy complexion His face is disfigured and covered with mud, for thy honours He is ignominiously bound. O Lord, who would not rather have never been born than have offended Thee ! O my God ! Oh, who would not joyfully suffer for Thee ! It is I who have sinned, and Thou who dost penance for me. Oh, blessed be Thou for ever and ever !

Second Point.—Consider that, as St. Bonaventure says, and it is piously believed, the Queen of Heaven, with her holy escort, followed in the footsteps of Christ. What must have been her grief and suffering at seeing Him thus ignominiously treated ? What her yearning and desire to wipe His face, though it were with the very flesh of her heart ? Abraham would not suffer the feet of poor pilgrims to be soiled by the least mud without washing them ; how, then, can it be suffered that the face of the Saviour, in which the angels and all the heavenly court delight, should be thus defiled ? What streams of tears must have flown from the eyes of Mary Magdalen to wash those stains as but shortly before they were shed to cleanse His feet ! O my soul ! follow thy Lord to the Cross, and approach with reverence, and

since thou art not worthy to reach His face, bend down at His feet and offer Him thy heart and thy life, and thine eyes to weep and bemoan His sufferings and affronts with an eternal compassion.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ lives again in His servants, and that those ill-treat Him like Herod and his suite, who mock or ill-treat as mad or ignorant His priests, religious, and hermits, and those who endeavour to serve Him. Take heed, therefore, that thou fall not into such a sin; rather beg of the Lord by His infinite patience and goodness to preserve thee from offending His servants, and to teach thee to honour and serve Him in them as in His own person.

Fourth Point.—Consider what the Evangelist says, that from that hour Herod and Pilate were reconciled and became friends. See how the Saviour was ever an angel of peace, since even in His passion He established concord amongst His enemies, and He begs for it and desires it amongst His friends. Rejoice at having so peaceful and so good a Lord; and pray Him that since He makes peace with all, to make peace between God and the world, and between thee and thy Creator, and ask Him to terminate the wars and enmities sown by the sin of Adam, and to reconcile us all with our God.

EIGHTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE GOSPEL.—(ST. JOHN VII.)

The Pharisees sent men to seize Christ. He received them with holy words and salutary instructions, and told them that He would still remain with them a little while, and then that He should go where they could

not follow Him, and thus they did not then execute their evil design.

First Point.—Consider how, at the very time when Christ was labouring to deliver this people from the chains of their sins, they were endeavouring to seize and imprison Him ; and on the one hand, praise the bounty of the Saviour, who was in no way ignorant of their wicked intentions ; and on the other, remark the deep malice of men who try to offend God most grievously at the time when He is granting them the greatest favours, and take heed that thou fall not in like manner. Beg of the Lord to extend His mighty hand to assist thee in being ever grateful to Him, and in serving Him forever, and with greater fervour in proportion as thou receivedst greater mercies from His Divine hand.

Second Point.—Consider what the Saviour said to those who came to seize Him : “ Yet a little while, and I am with you ; and then I go to Him that sent me : you shall seek me, and shall not find me.” That short time is, as St. Augustine says, the duration of this life. Consider how short it truly is, and how soon it passes, and how all glory and prosperity pass away with such rapidity that they hardly begin before they end ; set thy heart on that which is eternal, and lasts for ever. Consider also that now thou canst do the will of God, and receive from His hands great mercies ; do not let them pass by, for, as Christ says afterwards, thou wilt seek them and not find them, in punishment for thy neglect, and for not having sought them when they awaited thee.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ calls those who thirst, that He may give them the water of life, saying, “ If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink.” And He calls thee on account of the love He has for thee, that thou mayest drink of the fountain of His grace, and of the source of His mercies. Tarry not, and go not to the muddy wells of the world, which cannot satisfy thy thirst, but rather augment it. O Fountain of living waters ! how deceived have I been to seek the broken and

empty pitchers of this world. I come to Thee now ; oh, give me a drop of this water to refresh my heart and to satisfy it, for all that which comes not from Thee is bad water, that increases the thirst and kills the soul.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the Saviour says that from him that drinks of this water shall come forth springs and rivers of living water, because not only will he be satisfied, but from his abundance he will give to others the living water of the Lord, for the salvation of their souls ; for such is the liberality with which God communicates His gifts to those who thirst for them. Enkindle in thy soul a desire for these gifts by considering their value ; weigh and consider slowly what Christ offers thee, and what He gives thee ; awaken thy desires and approach Him with true humility ; confide in His bounty, and He will enrich thee, that thou mayest enrich thy neighbours, to whom thou shouldst communicate the favours of the Lord with the same liberality and openness with which He communicates them to thee.

EIGHTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

HOW PILATE EXAMINED CHRIST A SECOND TIME.

First Point.—Consider Christ before the president in that white garb of a madman, reputed as such, and surrounded by an infinite number of enemies, who ceased not to accuse Him with new and false testimony, to which Christ answered, as before, by silence ; and considering thyself in this mirror, learn the greatness of the virtues that He teaches thee, and especially confidence in troubles and persecutions ; and if thou be reputed imprudent and unsuccessful in thy actions, and as wanting in intelligence and talents for things of importance, suffer

and be silent, giving thanks to God for affording thee an occasion of imitating Him, and allowing thee, by being defamed without cause, to have a share in His cross.

Second Point.—Consider how the president, having heard the answer of Herod, and the accusations against Christ, spoke to Him again in private, and questioned Him that He might answer them, and, full of wonder at His silence, he said, “How is it that thou dost not answer me, who have power to deliver or to condemn Thee?” To which the Saviour answered, “Thou shouldst not have any power against me unless it were given thee from above.” Meditate on these words of deep meaning, in which Christ declares how all His heart is placed in God, from whose hand He accepted all that was sent Him through the hands of men, who were the instruments made use of for the execution of the Divine will, which Christ fulfilled with great joy, though at the cost of so many sufferings and affronts. Consider these words with great attention, and notice that no one has power over thee except from God, and that from His hand and by His disposition are sent all the affronts and labours which fall on thee; receive them as His gifts, follow the example of thy Redeemer, and thou wilt find joy in troubles, sweetness in bitterness, and rest in the fatigues borne for His love.

Third Point.—Consider how the president, having heard Christ, returned to the people, and told them that he found no cause to condemn Him, neither had Herod, to whom he had sent Him. Who would not have thought that the Saviour, being found and declared innocent by two such notable persons, would be set at liberty by the people, since the word of a king and the opinion of a governor have such weight? But Christ chose to pass through this trial for the consolation of those who, being on the point of happiness, are deceived; because the opinion of the king and his word served the Saviour in causing Him to be considered mad, but it did not serve for His delivery, though Herod had said that he

saw no reason for His death. Who would not bear willingly any troubles, seeing what the Saviour goes through, and how, being so perfectly innocent, He is condemned without defence or consolation of any kind ? Blessed be Thou, O Lord, who hast chosen to bear even my misfortunes for my consolation and relief ! give me grace to bear them with equanimity like Thine.

Fourth Point.—Consider those words which Pilate repeated so many times to the people, “I find no cause in Him.” Consider with attention whether thou findest any cause for Christ’s death, and turn thine eyes on thyself, and see if thou findest any in thyself. Pilate found no cause of death in Christ, because he did not know Him ; but if thou knowest and considerest Him in the interior of thy breast, thou wilt find many causes, such as His infinite love and the immense charity with which He loves thee, His pity, His mercy, and the ardent desire that He has for the salvation of souls, and especially for thine ; and if thou considerest thyself, thou wilt find as many causes as are the sins that thou hast committed. We have all sinned, and we all need the grace of Christ, as the apostle says, and His redemption. All these causes thou wilt find, for which thou shouldst give Him great thanks, and at the same time grieve for having given cause on thy part for His death and Passion. O Lord, may the angels bless Thee, that Thou didst make Thine infinite love for me a sufficient reason to die ! Oh, that I knew how to love Thee as Thou lovest me, that I might die for Thee, as Thou didst die for me ! I it was who sinned ; I it is who ought to pay ; I am the cause, I therefore ought to suffer.

EIGHTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE GOSPEL.—(JOHN VII.)

In this Gospel we have to consider that Christ refused to go up to Jerusalem for the feast of the Pasch, because the Jews sought to kill Him ; but notwithstanding this, He went up secretly a little later ; and various opinions were given on His life : some said that it was good, others that it was bad, and that He deceived the people.

First Point.—Consider the state to which the malice of men reduced Christ, obliging Him to wander an exile from Jerusalem, and to deprive Himself from assisting at the temple of God, and from authorising by His presence the sacrifices, as was His custom, causing thus great detriment to the faithful and to those who were to believe in Him. Grieve very much to see thy Divine Master thus exiled, and thus obliged to seek shelter abroad, without being able to remain with safety in His own land ; and consider how often thou hast exiled Him from thy soul by thy sins ; and if He be now banished from it, and thy lukewarmness does not allow Him to live and keep company with thee, grieve very much, and seek Him, with the spouse of the Canticles, call Him, and beg of Him to come into thy poor inn, and not to banish Himself from it, since He says that His delights are to be with the children of men.

Second Point.—Consider how, though Christ delayed going up to the Temple on account of the malice of the Jews, and remained in retirement, and as though hidden, yet He afterwards went up and was present at the feast of the Pasch ; from which thou shouldst learn to have great confidence in His goodness, that He will come to thy soul, even though He be obliged for just causes to retire from it sometimes, either to punish thy coldness,

or to humble thy pride, or to awaken thy will to love and seek and serve Him with greater fervour.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ says that the world hates Him because He bears witness to its wickedness, and that in consequence it loves those who do not speak the truth, but who flatter it, and, allowing themselves to be carried away by its doctrines, praise its works. Oh, how unfortunate are such as these, what misery awaits them ! See how important it is for thee not to take side with the world, but to follow Christ in the path of virtue ; and turn thine eyes on thyself, and consider whether the world abhors thee as it does Christ ; and if it persecutes thee as it did Him, or whether it applauds and praises thee ; fear its applause, which is a sign that thou art on its side, and love its hatred, which is a proof that thou followest the banner of the Lord, which is the way to life.

Fourth Point.—Take note of the various opinions which, according to the words of St. John, were current in the town about Christ. Some said that He was good and holy, others that He was bad and a sinner, and that He deceived the people ; and learn not to take notice of the judgment of men, since they are so erring, and console thyself with the example of the Saviour, if some think ill of thee and hold false opinions of thy life ; be silent and suffer, and be patient for awhile, offering it to the Lord as Christ did, He will help, console, and defend thee, when it is expedient and He thinks right. Put thyself in His hands, and abandon thy cause to His care, for He will bring it to a happy issue.

*EIGHTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.**For the same Day.*

HOW CHRIST WAS REJECTED FOR BARABBAS.

First Point.—Come, my soul, to the pretorium of Pilate, and to the principal place of Jerusalem, and consider with attention what takes place there. Cast thine eyes over that multitude of people who have assembled on hearing that the priests are trying to crucify Christ; and as He had already made several journeys, it was now broad daylight, and a very numerous assemblage was drawn up waiting to see how the cause of the Saviour should terminate, and, according to St. Bonaventure, the Blessed Virgin and her companions were there, though apart from the crowd, and full of the grief and desolation that can be imagined; accompany her, my soul, and lose not sight of her one instant. Contemplate, then, this open place full of people—the priests exciting the multitude against Christ, and Pilate in the gallery to pass sentence on the Saviour, who is in the lower part of the pretorium alone, bound, and a prisoner, His eyes on the ground, His heart with God, all eyes are turned on Him, but none with compassion. Look on Him, O my soul, and compassionate Him, and His most holy Mother who cannot help Him, and offer them both thy soul and thy life, and all thou hast, to obtain His liberty.

Second Point.—Consider how Pilate, having recognised the innocence of Christ, but not having courage to set Him free for fear of the Jews, took the means of offering them to chose between Him and Barabbas, who was a seditious man, a robber, and a murderer; and putting them in the balance, he told the people to chose which of the two they would have set free for the feast of the Pasch, fully persuaded that Barabbas was such a bad man, and had injured so many persons, that there

would be no one to ask for him, or even to care about him, in the whole multitude. This was, in truth, one of the greatest insults that Christ had to suffer in His Passion; for, as Seneca says, it is a great honour to be compared with eminent persons, but it is the greatest ignominy and affront to be compared with low and vile persons. What, then, was that which the Saviour suffered, He who is the honour of heaven and earth, when He was put in the balance and compared with the vilest and most abject evil-doer of that time? O angels! why do you not come down now and acknowledge and publish who this Lord is, as you came down when you saw Him humbled in the crib of Bethlehem? If you then announced His greatness and Godhead to the shepherds, how do you not now do so to this blind people, that they may not do Him so great an insult? But, O good Jesus! Thou chocest to suffer all these ignominies for me, that I might learn how to suffer some slight ones for Thee. And thou, O my soul! compassionate thy Redeemer, and learn to bear with patience thy sufferings when thou seest thyself compared with thy inferiors, as thy Saviour is this day.

Third Point.—Consider what took place on this occasion, which was as follows:—The priests, on account of their hatred for Christ, to carry out their evil intentions, and to have the sentence of their council approved, persuaded the people to call for Barabbas, and not for Christ; and, notwithstanding that amongst the people there were so many who had received health from Christ's hands, who had heard His doctrine and seen His miracles, and so many whom He might have expected to have taken up His cause, and cried out in His behalf, there was not one who dared to speak for Him, for fear of the priests, who, with all the people, cried out, and said: "Barabbas! Barabbas! crucify this man!" not deigning even to name Him. O heavens! how can you hear of such execrable malice, and yet continue your habitual course? O good Jesus! this is, then, the

people for whom Thou hast done so much. O my God! how have they so forgotten Thee and fallen into so enormous an error as to abandon Thee, the Greatness of the Father, the Glory of the heavens, the Honour of angels, the Life of the world, and the Author of all created things, for the vilest of all creatures? Here thought fails, and the understanding is incapable of meditating on such wickedness; consider it, my soul; think over and ponder what the Saviour must have felt at seeing Himself despised and set aside for so vile a creature, and what the Blessed Virgin must have undergone on hearing those cries, each of which must have been as a poniard piercing her stricken heart; and learn from His example to bear with patience to see thyself set aside, and thy inferiors preferred to thee, for none can be so far below thee as Barabbas was to Christ.

Fourth Point.—Enter into account with thyself, and consider how many times thou hast had to choose between Christ and Barabbas, for whenever some point of honour—riches or pleasure—opposes itself to the will and service of Christ, thou hast to choose one or the other—Christ or the pleasure, God or sin. Lay thy hand on thy heart, and examine the passion of honour, or revenge, or disordered affections, or whatever vice reigns within thee—that is a Barabbas who is put into the same balance with Christ; and imagine that thou hearest a voice telling thee to choose one of the two. Consider and see how important it is for thee to know how to choose, and which to prefer—Christ or this Barabbas, who reigns in thy heart; and follow not this blind and depraved people which preferred Barabbas to Christ; but rather cry out from thine innermost soul, and say with tearful eyes: Jesus! Jesus! I choose, and will for ever prefer. O God and my Lord, it is Thee I love, and Thy slave that I would be; I love Thee more than all the world—more than myself, and more than all that I can wish or ask for that is not Thee.

*EIGHTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.**For the Wednesday in Passion Week.*

ON THE FEAST OF THE REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE
WHEN CHRIST WENT UP TO JERUSALEM.

St. John tells us that Christ went up to Jerusalem to celebrate the festival of the rebuilding of the Temple, and that the Jews surrounded Him, begging Him to declare whether He was Christ, to which the Redeemer answered that His works gave sufficient testimony of who He was ; and they, blinded by His light, took up stones to throw at Him, saying that He blasphemed, because He made Himself to be Son of God, to which Christ answered, with meekness : " Believe in my works ; they give evidence of me."

First Point.—Consider how Christ went up to the Temple to celebrate the Pasch and to assist at the solemnities of that day, though He knew the calumnies that the Jews would bring up against Him, to teach us to frequent the churches and to approve the Divine service by assisting at the holy offices and solemnities of the Church, which are ordained for the honour and glory of God. Learn, like Christ, not to allow thyself to be defeated by the difficulties which the devil will oppose, but break through them with valour, in order not to be wanting in the service of God.

Second Point.—Consider that, as St. Augustine says, this feast was the symbol of the renovation of the soul, when abandoning the habits of the old Adam it clothes and renews itself with those of Christ who went up to that rebuilding, as He always goes to the soul which renews itself spiritually and makes it His resting-place. Beg His grace to renew thy life and improve thy ways ; see how much thy fervour and holiness of the desire to

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serve God have become cold, and beg of Him to come and make His abode in thee.

Third Point.—Consider how His enemies surrounded Him, begging of Him to declare Himself in their favour, not from a desire to follow Him, but to calumniate Him, for they had called His truth blasphemy, and they went so far as to take up stones against Him; from which thou shouldst draw, for thy improvement, that not all those who approach Christ go out from His presence improved, but only those who approach Him with an honest intention and a real desire of improvement. Grieve to see how many surround Him in the Temple, and how few profit by His society because they do not go with a right intention; and see whether thou hast it, and what profit thou drawest from His sanctity and doctrine. Consider also how His enemies took occasion of the truth to stone the Saviour, and how they qualified as blasphemy His saying that He was the Son of God. Such was their malice, and such is that of those who turn against preachers, and those who tell them the truth. Beg of the Lord to give thee grace to appreciate His truth as thou shouldst, and for no human consideration to be afraid of speaking.

Fourth Point.—Consider the answer of Christ, that His works give testimony of who He is, and that on account of them they ought to acknowledge and adore Him as the Son of the Most High. Consider the works of the Redeemer, and recognise Him, praise and bless Him for them, and turn thine eyes on thyself and see what testimony thine give of thee, and if thou might be known by them to be His child and worthy of being His disciple; and take heed that heaven and earth are on the watch, and that all must know thee by thy works. Beg of the Lord grace to improve and make thy works such as to give clear testimony to thy being the child of God and not a bound slave of Satan.

EIGHTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

HOW PILATE DELIVERED UP CHRIST TO BE SCOURGED.

First Point.—Consider how Pilate, giving way, like a coward, to the will of the priests and the shouts of the people, gave Barabbas his liberty and retained Christ a prisoner. Consider, then, the delight and congratulations of that thief and homicide, and the huzzas of many at seeing him at liberty, like those which salute a successful champion who has just gained some dignity in opposition to others, and the opprobrium with which Christ is covered. Such is the manner in which the world treats the good and honours the wicked, but afterwards they shall change places, and the evil shall be sent down into the abyss, whilst the just shall be exalted even to the throne of the Most High.

Second Point.—Consider how the judge asked the people what he should do with Christ who was called Jesus, and they with one voice cried out, "*Crucify Him!*" Imagine thyself to be there present, and that the same question is put to thee; what will thine answer be? What is to be done with Christ who is called Jesus? Answer, Let Him live for all eternity, let Him be adored and served by all creatures, let Him come into my heart and take possession of my soul, and never be separated from me for ever.

Third Point.—Pilate, seeing the obstinacy of the people, and that no consideration would make them deliver Christ, resolved to inflict on His person a remarkable punishment to appease the anger of the people by that means, and therefore he delivered Christ into the hands of the torturers to be scourged. Contemplate, O my soul, thy sweet Spouse dragged out of the presence of the judge in the sight of His most holy Mother,

and conducted, that His humiliation might be the greater, to a public place where it was the custom to scourge robbers and malefactors; there He is stripped of His clothes and is left to the vulgar gaze of all the people, that by His nakedness He may cover that of Adam better than with the leaves of a fig-tree; see His shame and the torture that that ignominy must have caused Him, and see how they then bound Him tightly to the pillar and began that rigorous and bloody discipline, His delicate flesh being furrowed with the points of the scourges which St. Jerome says were made, some of the nerves of oxen knotted, and others of thorns and briers, which must have cruelly ploughed that virginal flesh, dragging out pieces and making the blood flow in streams from that bruised rock, for the food of souls and the purification of sins. Come and gather up some of that salutary balsam to cure the wounds made by thy sins. O Lord! O my God! O angels! how can you bear such things? O Eternal Father! what hast Thy most holy Son done that Thou shouldst let loose on His shoulders such a discipline? I sinned, and He pays the penalty? What a division is this? O my God! who would not give worlds to untie Thee from that pillar and to receive the blows in Thy stead? blessed be Thy charity, which outstrips our wildest imagination.

Fourth Point.—Consider how His tormentors were so cruel, that when His shoulders were already but one wound, they turned His back to the column, and tying Him tightly, they began again taking turns to wound and scourge Him on His breast and over the rest of His body with incomparable cruelty, so that, according to the prophecy of Isaias, from His head to His feet, there was no part whole. O Eternal Lord, is that the bosom on which reposed Thy most holy Mother and Thy beloved disciple John? O most merciful Virgin, who can console thy pierced heart in such an incomparable grief and sorrow? Be attentive, my soul, to the whole of this cruel discipline, contemplating the heroic virtues of thy Saviour,

and see how, according to St. Bridget, the execution being finished, one of the soldiers cut the cord that held Him to the column, and being so weakened by loss of blood, the Saviour fell to the ground bathed in His own blood, unable to hold Himself up, and there again, with incredible inhumanity, He was struck and buffeted. O sweet Jesus, is this the bath of roses, flowers of precious wines, which was prepared for Thee to heal the wounds caused by my sins? What is all this, Lord? How far is thy torment to be carried, and what is to be the end of Thy Passion? My eyes shall become fountains, bringing forth streams of water to wash Thy wounds, and my heart shall give its very flesh to bind them with; give me leave to approach Thy feet to gather up Thy blood, and with it to wash and purify my heart from the stains of my sins.

NINETIETH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE CONVERSION OF ST. MARY MAGDALEN.

The Gospel tells us that Mary Magdalen, knowing that Christ was invited to dine with a certain Pharisee, came to find Him, and threw herself at His feet, washing them with her tears, and wiping them with her hair, and anointing them with a sweet ointment, which caused the Pharisee to think ill of her, and to murmur against Christ and her in his heart: but Christ defended the converted sinner, and forgave her sins, and sent her back in peace into her house.

First Point.—Enter in spirit into the house of this Pharisee, and contemplate three different feasts that are given there. The first is that of the Pharisee, in which Christ was invited to eat the food of the body, but which Christ accepted in order to give to him and to Magdalen

the food of the soul, with which intention only such invitations should be accepted. The second is that of St. Mary Magdalen, in which Christ is invited to partake of her heart, seasoned by the fire of her love and her repentance for her sins, and as drink He is offered of the fountain of tears which flow from her eyes; learn to invite Christ, and to beg Him to come into thy poor house, and offer Him thy heart with that of St. Mary Magdalen, seasoned with the fire of true contrition and grief for sin. The third banquet is that which Christ offers to both, paying their hospitality with the bread of life and food of the soul; to the Pharisee He gives the correction of his errors, curing the wounds of his conscience; to Magdalen He gives the pardon of her sins, and enriches her with spiritual treasures; and to both He grants the food of His celestial doctrine. Meditate on these three banquets, be present at each of them, and draw from each profit and food for thy soul.

Second Point.—Consider St. Mary Magdalen at the Saviour's feet weeping, and silent with the vehemence of her love and her sorrow for her sins, as St. Laurence Justinian tells us, and anointing with a sweet balsam the feet of Christ, wiping them with her hair, and pressing her lips to the soles of His sacred feet. Enter in spirit into her breast, and contemplate her heart burning at the same time with love of God, and sorrow for having offended Him; listen to what she says, for though silent she speaks, and though dumb yet the pupils of her eyes, and the torrents of tears that flow from them, cry aloud. See what an agreeable offering she makes to Christ, and accompany her in her complaint; throw thyself at the feet of the Saviour, silent and weeping, He will accept thy contrition, and grant thee the same graces that He bestowed on this holy sinner.

Third Point.—Consider how the Pharisee thought evil of Christ because He allowed Himself to be touched by this sinner, and of her because she dared to touch Him, condemning them both in his heart; and how

Christ knew what judgment he was making, and gently reproved him, taking up the defence of Magdalen and of Himself ; in which thou hast much to learn,—first, not to murmur against the services rendered to God, nor against spiritual men who are governed by superior ends, which thou shouldst not condemn ; secondly, to bear it patiently when, like Magdalen, thou seest thyself murmured against on account of thy good works, being persuaded that there will always be persons to speak ill of whatever thou dost ; thirdly, to leave to God the care of defending thee, He will take thy cause in hand as Christ did that of this holy sinner ; fourthly, see how God penetrates into thine innermost heart, and that nothing is hidden from His sight, and treat the interior things of thy soul like one who acts in the presence of God.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ turned round to look on St. Mary Magdalen, and, recompensing her humility and repentance, told her that He forgave her sins, and that she might go in peace. O my soul ! what a treasure thou hast here from which to draw the purest gold to enrich thee with spiritual goods. Christ turned His eyes on Magdalen and forgave her her sins, and with pardon He communicated peace and tranquillity to her soul ; these are the steps by which sanctity approaches the soul—first, God looks on it ; second, He forgives, and then He gives that peace which none can have whilst possessed by sin. Place thyself with Magdalen at the feet of Christ, perchance thou hast sinned more than she ; beg of Him to turn His eyes on thee and to forgive thy sins. O good Jesus ! look at me and have mercy on me ; heed not the hideousness of my faults, but rather let Thy pity conquer the greatness of mine iniquity ; look at me and forgive me like this holy sinner, for I grieve that I have offended Thee, and I ardently desire her tears and contrition to grieve over and wash away my faults. O Lord, what peace and unspeakable joy Thou didst bestow on her soul by that word, “ Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace ! ” Let me also hear it from Thy mouth,

O Lord, and give peace to this sinner, for if **Thou** wilt not give it me, I can never obtain it.

NINETY-FIRST MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

ON THE VIRTUES THAT CHRIST BOUND TO THE COLUMN
TEACHES US.

First Point.—Pass not on hastily from the governor's house, but rather tarry a little to contemplate with attention, not the image of Christ, but His own person tied by thy hands to the column, and one wound from head to foot by the severity of the scourging; listen to the lesson which He gives thee, not only of patience, but of many other virtues which He teaches in silence by the mouths of so many wounds which cover His most holy body. First, He teaches thee to macerate thy body by fasts, the discipline and other austerities; for if the Saviour, who never committed any sin, and from whose mouth no imperfect word was ever heard, does such penance as this for the faults of others, how much more reason that thou shouldst suffer the like for thine own offences. And as our holy Father St. Ignatius says, were there no other fruit to be gained than the imitation of Christ, and becoming His likeness, it would still be our greatest interest to discipline ourselves and do great penance for His love.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ stripped Himself, and suffered that great shame for our love, teaching us to suffer any shame or humiliation that may be offered us for His love, laying bare our consciences to our confessor and director, and showing our faults to obtain pardon for them.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ accepted this pun-

ishment, which was reserved for robbers and murderers, without opening His lips or appealing on His own behalf, nor through the mediation of any one, although He was so perfectly innocent; to give us an example of bearing whatever manner of punishments our superiors may inflict on us for our faults in silence and patience, according to His example, and as though dispensed by the hand of God, who sees and knows all that passes.

Fourth Point.—Contemplate Christ naked, wounded, a prisoner, and abandoned, and enter into thyself and see what thou wouldst give to be so happy as to be allowed to heal, wash, clothe, and console Him; and consider that thou canst do all this in the persons of His poor, healing the wounded, clothing the naked, giving liberty to those who are in prison, and consoling the afflicted; for He says, “As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me” (Matt. xxv.) Profit, then, by this lesson, and, moved to compassion, grieve over thy Saviour, and endeavour to heal, clothe, and deliver Him, in the person of His poor.

NINETY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE COUNCIL THAT THE PRIESTS ASSEMBLED AGAINST CHRIST AT JERUSALEM.—(JOHN II.)

The Priests and Pharisees, seeing the miracles performed by Christ, and that the people followed Him, assembled a council to find means of stopping this course, and hinder those that were beginning to believe in the Saviour; and Caiphas, being the high priest that year, prophesied that it was expedient that Christ should die for all.

First Point.—Consider how the enemies of Christ,

being assembled to calumniate His life, could find in Him no other fault than that He wrought many miracles, and that every one believed in Him ; rejoice to have a Lord and Master so high in sanctity that all His enemies could find in Him no other offence than His virtues and miracles, and that these were the accusations they brought against Him ; console thyself by His example, if thou art at any time persecuted for the good thou dost to thy neighbour, and for works of the service of God ; see how the Redeemer bears persecution, and how thou shouldst bear them, and thank Him for having deigned to give thee a share in His cross.

Second Point.—Consider what was the purpose of this council, in which it is said, “What do we, for this man doth many miracles? if we let Him alone, so all will believe in Him.” Take these words and profit by them ; make a council within thyself, assembling the powers and faculties of thy soul, and say, what do we ? for this Lord works many wonders, how is it that we hasten not to serve Him and imitate Him ? What account shall we give of so many marvels as He performs each day, and of so many signs which should draw us to His service ? All believe in Him, all follow Him and serve Him, except thee, O ungrateful and idle servant ! wake and rouse up thy will and thy senses to serve this Lord who calls thee by so many signs.

Third Point.—Consider how these men feared the loss of their kingdom if they believed in Christ, and they did lose it completely by disbelieving Him and opposing His doctrine. This is what befalls those who, out of consideration for earthly goods, abandon the path of virtue ; they lose both the one and the other ; let not Satan deceive thee, nor the love of present goods, fix thine eyes on eternal ones, and endeavour to procure them at whatever cost, and God will bestow both on thee.

Fourth Point.—Be attentive to the determination taken at this council, and to the mouth whence it comes, which is that of the high priest for that year, for though a bad

man, on account of the office he held, God guided his tongue that he might say what was expedient, which was that Christ should die for all. O good Jesus, we sin, and it is decreed that Thou shalt pay with Thy life for our iniquities! Observe how God guides the tongues of prelates, however wicked they may be, and that we should accept their words as dictated by God, and guide ourselves by them. Hear this sentence, and, raising thine eyes to heaven, see how the eternal Father confirms it and approves it in His most just tribunal, but with a very different intention; for those wicked ministers intended to blot out the name of Christ from the earth; but the eternal Father designed to save the world by His death, and to purify the earth by the deluge of His Blood, not at the cost of men as was the first deluge, but at that of His most holy Son. O Lord! blessed be Thou a thousand times, who hast so loved us that Thou hast given us Thy Beloved Son to be our ransom; be He mine, O Lord of my soul, and permit not that whilst He washes with His Blood the whole world, I alone should remain stained with sin; grant me to be eternally grateful to Him, and that for nothing on earth I may leave off serving Him.

NINETY-THIRD MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

ON THE CROWNING WITH THORNS.—(MATT. XXVII.;
LUKE XXII.)

First Point.—Until now the enemies of Christ had made use of various means to torment Him, some by affronts, others by bitter torments; but their diabolical rage now invented a mode by which to unite in one pains, affronts, ignominy, and grievous suffering, making of Him a toy, dressing Him in purple as a fictitious king,

crowning Him with thorns, and placing as a sceptre a reed in His hand, kneeling before Him, mocking Him, and spitting at Him as a mock king. Come, O my soul, and see what takes place in the house of Pilate, rest thine eyes on thy holy Spouse, see Him crowned with thorns, with the diadem that His mother, the Synagogue, has given Him in the day of His great joy, when He redeemed the world with His precious blood. Lift thine eyes to heaven and see Him on the right hand of the Father on a throne of immense majesty, adored, praised, and blessed by the angels, and then turn them to the earth and see Him scoffed, despised, spat upon, and made a plaything of men, see if thou dost recognise Him, and compare the one throne with the other, and admire His patience, His meekness, His silence, His humility, and longsuffering, and only turn thine eyes from looking on Him, and compassionate His pains, to weep over thy sins which caused so much suffering to thy Saviour.

Second Point.—See how Christ is stripped of His own clothes and covered with a purple cloak, old and torn, and how the soldiers, taking branches of thorns, bent them into a garland, not of flowers but of thorns and hard reeds, which they put on the head of the Saviour, and, not to hurt themselves, they used pincers with which to make it. *Notice the pain that our Lord must have felt in this new torture, and how His forehead must have been torn with those sharp points, drawing from His sacred head the little blood that still remained there, and which now flowed from His eyes, His face, and mouth, as well as from the other parts of His body; and to alleviate these pains the soldiers knelt to Him mocking Him, striking His head and face with the reed for greater insult. O King of kings! what dress is this, and what crown, and what Thine obedience, Thou whom the heavens, the earth, and all Thy creatures revere? Blessed be Thy name, for these pains and affronts which Thou chocest to suffer for me. O my God! that I had but virtue enough to suffer the like for Thee.

Third Point.—Consider that that purple robe signifies

the charity of Christ, which hid the wounds caused by our sins, finding excuses for us with the Eternal Father; and that crown made of thorns, those that our wicked earth brought forth by sin, and which the Saviour bore on His sacred head, and softened with the sweet liquor of His blood, to mitigate our pains and soften our penance. O Saviour of the world! I thank Thee a thousand times that so much at Thy cost Thou chocest to facilitate for me the road to heaven, and to take from my path the impediments which prevented me from going to Thee. Give me grace that, as Thou didst hide my sins with the greatness of Thy charity, so I may hide those of my neighbours, and may know how to excuse them before God and men, and to take on me their pains, and alleviate their fatigues as Thou didst mine.

Fourth Point.—Consider how thy head should be when that of Christ was so treated; and that when thou adornest thy forehead with flowers, and the care of thy hair, thou placest on His another crown of thorns. Also vain, self-sufficient, and sensual thoughts in which thou delightest are fresh thorns which pierce the head of the Saviour; whilst, on the contrary, those of heaven, of His glory, and of His holy service are sweet flowers which adorn His head and mitigate His torments. See that thou do not augment them, but make it thy study to alleviate and diminish them, seeking always His greater glory and service in all that thou dost, thinkest, and sayest.

NINETY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE GOSPEL.—(ST. JOHN XII.)

The Evangelist tells us how the Jews resolved to kill Lazarus, because they saw that on his account many

came to be disciples of Christ, and how Gentiles also came and believed in Him, and the Eternal Father gave fresh testimony to Him by a voice from heaven, and the people received Him with branches and palms and canticles of praise ; and Christ withdrew to the desert of Ephraim because of the envy of the Jews.

First Point.—Consider the persecution to which Lazarus was subjected, on account of the favour that Christ had done him in restoring him to life ; for the Jews determined to take his life violently in order, if possible, to obscure the miracle which had been wrought in him ; and see how common it is to the servants of God to suffer persecution and envy on account of the graces they receive from His hand, and be not astonished at those which befall thee for that cause, but rather dispose thy heart to suffer labours, envy, and persecutions for His love ; and beg of Him His grace to bear them with patience, for God will defend thee as He defended Lazarus from his enemies.

Second Point.—Consider how the Jews, who had greater light by which to know the Saviour, persecuted Him and endeavoured to take His life, whilst the Gentiles, who had less, sought to know Him and to serve Him. Be ashamed to see how little thou servest Him, and how lukewarmly thou seekest Him, having received from His hand so much light and so many favours, for others, who have received less, serve Him better than thou. Resolve, then, to serve Him from this hour with fervour, and to seek Him, by all means possible to thee, after the example of these Gentiles who took so much pains to see and know the Saviour.

Third Point.—Consider how the Saviour, seeing that the crowd of people blessed Him and proclaimed Him to be the Saviour of the world, and that at the same time the Gentiles were beginning to know Him,—finding Himself at the same time acknowledged by the Hebrews and the Gentiles, He lifted up His eyes to heaven, giving thanks to His Eternal Father for the favour He conferred

on Him ; and the Father, by a voice that all heard, said that He had glorified Him, and He would glorify Him. Rejoice at the glory of the Lord, and observe that the most agreeable services that thou canst render Him consist in bringing others to His knowledge and service ; ask of Him to grant thee His Holy Spirit for the conversion of infidels, and to bring all the world to His feet ; and at the same time learn to give thanks to God for the benefits that He bestows on thee, and which He multiplies to those who are grateful for them.

Fourth Point.—Consider how no favour is unaccompanied by trial, and that the applause Christ received, and the voice from heaven, were followed by the furious envy of the Scribes and Pharisees, who sought to take His life ; but He, yielding to their anger, withdrew from their sight. Recognise in this incident how pernicious a thing is envy, and beg of God to deliver thee from falling into that sin, and at the same time to help thee to spare the weak from the occasions of it, as Christ did on this occasion with His enemies. Place thyself in His hands, for He will defend thee and bring thee out with advantage. Accompany Him in His retreat, and suffer Him not to go alone, but rather beg Him earnestly to take thee with Him to the desert of Ephraim, solitary city, where thou wilt find that security and tranquillity which thou canst not obtain in the tumult of the world.

NINETY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

HOW PILATE SHOWED CHRIST TO THE PEOPLE, SAYING,
 “BEHOLD THE MAN !”—(ST. JOHN XIX.)

First Point.—Consider, O my soul ! what was the condition of thy gentle Spouse on this occasion, since the

president, seeing Him thus wounded and dishonoured, crowned with thorns, naked, covered only with the purple cloak, and a very picture of sorrow, resolved to show Him to the people, persuaded that the very sight of Him would move them to pity, and that, seeing Him so afflicted, they would be satisfied with the vengeance they had accomplished. O my Jesus! what heart would not be softened, what heart would not be moved to compassion at the sight of Thy woe, when that Gentile judge was thus moved! Oh that my heart, harder than the rocks, might be softened and melted at the sight of such inexplicable sorrow, and of such unheard-of disgrace! What picture is this that I see before my eyes? Who has placed Thee in such a plight but I myself, through my sins? O angels! come and recognise your God, see if this be He who came down from heaven, and whom you acknowledged and adored in the manger—the Light of day, the Splendour of the Father, the Joy of glory, and the Consolation of the world. Look on Him thyself, O my soul! and see thyself in this mirror which is at hand; regulate by it thine actions, and correct thy faults.

Second Point.—Consider the shame thy Saviour must have felt at seeing Himself clothed with ignominy, and exposed before the whole population, Pilate raising the purple garment to discover His wounds, and crying, *Ecce homo!* “Behold the Man!” So wounded was He that it was difficult to recognise Him as such. Consider, that if an honourable man is pained at being seen by his countrymen badly dressed, and if Adam was ashamed to appear naked before his own wife, what must have been the disgrace and shame that Christ must have felt at seeing Himself naked and ill-covered, with an old and torn garment, which St. Bonaventure¹ tells us was of silk for greater affront, and covered with the wounds that the scourges had caused. O my soul! lift up thine eyes to look on this Man; listen to the voice of the president, who cries, *Ecce homo!*—but listen also to that

¹ Bonav. Med. lxxvi.

louder cry which comes from heaven repeating the same words, *Ecce homo!* Look on the man, Author of all men. Look on the man who is at once God and man. Look on the man who was formed by the virtue of the Holy Ghost,—who was born for thee and now dies for thee. Look on the man who came to show thee the way to heaven, and to pay the price of thy ransom. Look on the man who was the desired of past nations and the envied one of future generations: “Behold the man!” Look on His exterior, and consider in the interior that most holy soul in a body thus torn, that spirit so constant, so equal, and untroubled in all occurrences, offering that affront to His Father in expiation of thy vanities. Oh, blessed be Thy name, O Lord, that Thou hast bought me at so high a price, and that Thou hast paid so dearly for my ransom! Grant me, Lord, to be at least grateful, acknowledging what Thou hast gone through for me, and compassionating Thy pains.

Third Point.—Consider that, as the seraphic doctor says, the Blessed Virgin must have been present, though in a retired spot, with her holy companions, and that, lifting up her head to gaze on her Son, whilst He from above turned His eyes to look on His most tender mother, those heavenly eyes met each other; what must have been the grief of both on this occasion, and at such a meeting; and what must the Holy Virgin have replied to the words of Pilate, “Behold the man!” Look, most pure Virgin, and see if that be thy Son, and if that be the head that thou so often pressed to thy heart, and that the countenance that thou admired, and that breast the one on which thou reposed. “Behold the man!” Contemplate that man, and grant us all the grace to know and contemplate Him.

Fourth Point.—Consider the answer that the people gave the president, bowing down their heads and eyes, and making signs with their hands, “Take Him away and crucify Him.” Oh, what a piercing dart that cry must have been for the hearts of Christ, of Mary, and of their

devout servants ! and how it ought to penetrate thy heart if thou hadst a spark of love. Take note of the hardness of heart which came upon these wicked men for having yielded to their passions, and shut their ears to the voice of God. Since the splendour of such numberless virtues as those which Christ showed forth in His Passion, and so much blood spilt were not sufficient to move their obstinate hearts, do not allow thy faults to gain the mastery over thee, lest thou fall into a like condition ; take note of their answer, and thou wilt find in it the cause of their perdition. Take Him away from our sight, they cry, and crucify Him. From the first part follows the second, for those crucify Christ by their sins who take Him from before their eyes ; and those lose sight of Him who do not look on Him to contemplate His virtues, His sanctity, and the mercy that He constantly shows to men—like those who, having lost the sun, remain in darkness and are lost. O my good Jesus ! do not depart from me, nor let me take mine eyes off Thee. Oh, that I could continually, and without ceasing, look on Thee and contemplate Thee, as the angels see and contemplate Thee in heaven ! Look on me, Lord, as I am not capable of looking on Thee, and grant me this grace, that I may always, whilst this pilgrimage lasts, carry Thee in my thoughts, and contemplate thy Passion without ever losing sight of Thee.

NINETY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

For Palm Sunday.

HOW CHRIST ENTERED TRIUMPHANTLY INTO JERUSALEM.

Christ, knowing that the time of His Passion approached, sent two of His disciples to bring an ass, on which, having laid their garments, they seated the Saviour. He then entered into the city, which at His ap-

proach rose up to meet Him, with palms and branches, and great acclamations, calling Him the Saviour, Redeemer, and Blessed One who was come in the name of the Lord.

First Point.—Consider how Christ comes thus voluntarily to Jerusalem, where, though His entry is triumphant, He knows that He will, in a few days, be crucified. Give Him thanks for the mercy He does thee in coming to suffer for thee, and, following His example, offer thyself to do His holy will, and to suffer for Him; see how, like a dexterous and powerful knight, He walks over the very course which He will, in a short time, traverse for thee with His cross on His shoulders, and follow Him with thine, preparing thyself with energy to bear it for His love.

Second Point.—Consider how He sent His disciples to untie the animals and to bring them to Him, because these asses were figures of sinners, bound by the cords of their sins, to whom Christ sends His apostles to unbind them by the absolution of their sins, not that they may stray after new vices, like animals let loose on the green fields of this world, but rather that they may be brought to Him, and may submit themselves to His service; from which thou shouldst learn, if thou art a confessor or minister of the Gospel, the care that thou shouldst take to bring sinners to God, drawing them out of the captivity of their vices, and conducting them to Christ, not giving them too much rein, lest they return to their sins; and if thou be a disciple, thou hast to learn the humility and obedience with which thou shouldst submit to and obey the orders of those who command thee, for that is the means of coming to Christ.

Third Point.—Contemplate what takes place on this day in the court of Jerusalem. See Christ, so gracious and joyful, entering triumphantly, and all the people coming out to receive Him with palms and branches of olives, covering the streets with their garments. Take note of the great multitude of people which is to be seen in the streets and at the windows; hear the acclamations of the crowd which, with one voice, declares Him to be

the Son of David and the King of Israel, sent by God as Saviour and Redeemer; and at the sight of this triumph, consider the passage which, in five days, He will make through the same streets and squares with the same people, when He will be but one wound from head to foot, and crowned with thorns, a rope round His neck, the cross on His shoulders, declared and condemned publicly to be a thief and a false prophet, an evil and seditious man, will be conducted to be crucified by torturers, amidst murderers and robbers. O glories of this world, how short and how deceitful ye are! O triumphs of the earth, how soon you are changed into injuries and insults! Who could confide in you? Why, O Lord, didst Thou accept this triumph, knowing how soon it was to be changed into weeping, if it were not that Thine ignominy might be the greater when compared with this glory? Contemplate what takes place, and trust not in worldly glories and honours; they are delicate flowers which open in the morning and by evening are no more.

Fourth Point.—Consider, with St. Teresa of Jesus, how, amidst so many thousands who applauded Christ on this day in all that city, there was not one person who took Him to his house or gave Him or His disciples a mouthful of bread. Go thou out, my soul, to meet Jesus, and pray Him to come into thy poor dwelling, and offer Him thy heart and all that it contains. Beg of Him to forgive thine ingratitude, to accept thy good-will, and to come into thy soul; and yet further to compel Him, receive Him with branches of olive, the emblem of mercy, by having compassion on the poor, and giving them alms; and with palms in thy hands, as a symbol of victory, fighting valiantly against vice until thou conquerest thine enemies, and then the Lord will deign to come into thy house, and to grant thee the same graces that we are told He granted on this day to St. Teresa, inundating her soul with ineffable delights.

For the afternoon meditations during Holy Week we will consider the seven words of Christ on the cross,

which were as His legacy to us, and are the most mysterious and precious words that He spoke in all His lifetime.

NINETY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

ON THE FIRST WORD THAT CHRIST SPOKE ON THE CROSS,
“FATHER, FORGIVE THEM, FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT
THEY DO.”

First Point.—Consider what ardour of charity burned in the breast of Christ in the midst of such injuries, when, having His most holy Mother to console, as also His beloved disciple, and the holy women who had followed Him, and Dimas, who from his cross had confessed and defended His divinity, He yet put before all this His love for His enemies, praying for them to His heavenly Father from the altar of the cross, and begging Him with tears, as St. Paul says (Heb. v.), to forgive them. Oh, immense charity of the Saviour, who showed such love for His enemies! Learn, O my soul! not to hate or revenge thyself on those who have offended thee, giving evil for evil, but rather render good works for evil ones, and prayers for injuries, that thou mayest deserve to be son of God and heir to His glory.

Second Point.—Meditate on the words of Christ, and on the first in which He calls God “Father,” because it is a more touching and affectionate name, in order to move and constrain Him to mercy, declaring that the wounds of His enemies pained Him more than His own, and that He desired their cure more than His own relief; and the reason of this is, that His wounds were of the body, and those of His enemies were of the soul; and that Christ is more afflicted by a sin, and an offence against God, than by all the torments and affronts that

He suffered in His Passion. O heavenly Master, what a lesson Thou givest us from the pulpit of the cross ! Learn, O my soul ! what should grieve thee in this life ; not persecutions, pains, affronts, and corporal labours, for these affect only the body, but the wounds of sin, thine own as well as those of thy neighbours, because these penetrate the soul and offend the majesty of God ; these thou shouldst avoid at the cost of whatever pains and labours thou mayest have to undergo. Lay thy hand on thy heart, consider what suffering thou hast caused thy Saviour by thy sins in the course of thy life, and throw thyself at the foot of His cross, and beg pardon for them, melting in tears at having offended Him ; beg of Him to pray to His Eternal Father for thee, as for His greatest enemy, and the one who has done Him the greatest injuries.

Third Point.—Meditate on the second word, “Forgive them,” in which He discovers the high tone of His charity, for He does not say that He forgives them the injuries that they have done to His person, but He prays His father to forgive them ; because Christ had, for His own part, already forgiven them, and not only that, but had become their mediator before the tribunal of His Father. To what higher point could the charity of Christ have reached ? Who ever before witnessed the like—the person offended becoming the advocate of the offender ? To forgive an injury is held as great generosity ; what must it be not only to forgive but to plead before the judge for pardon for the offender ? To this high point did the charity of Christ reach ; and thou shouldst note that Christ prayed not only for those who then injured Him, but also for thee, and for all of us, who daily offend Him. Rejoice to have such a Father, such a Master, and such a Saviour ; rejoice to see such love, and such tender charity, and give Him thanks a million of times for the prayer He made for thee, and learn not only to forgive injuries, but also to become a mediator before God for such as offend thee.

Fourth Point.—Consider the last words of this petition: “For they know not what they do.” Christ did not content Himself for praying for His enemies, but in order the more easily to obtain their pardon, He excused their sin. Who else but our Redeemer could have found an excuse for such execrable wickedness? Thou findest excuses for thy sins, however grievous they may be, but thou canst never excuse thy neighbours’ faults, however slight; be ashamed in the presence of thy Saviour at hearing the excuse that He found for the incomparable malice of His persecutors. Thenceforth endeavour, with becoming charity, to excuse the faults of thy neighbours; ruminate and ponder over what Christ alleges, “For they know not what they do”—for did they know, it does not seem possible that they could commit such a sin. They know not who Christ is that they blaspheme, ill-treat, wound, and crucify unto death; nor who God is, whom they offend with their sins, nor the horrible torments that they deserve by them, nor the glory that they lose. O blind, O mad men! open your eyes and consider all this, and throw yourselves not blindly into an abyss of wickedness. Open thine eyes also, my soul, and fix them on thy crucified Saviour, whom thou offendest by thy sins, and ponder these four things: Who Christ is against whom thou sinnest; who God is that thou offendest; what glory thou lovest, and the hell thou deservest; and weep over thy sins, and beg of the Lord pardon and grace never more to offend Him.

NINETY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

HOW ST. MARY MAGDALEN ANOINTED OUR LORD.
(ST. JOHN XII.)

The holy Evangelist writes that six days before the Pasch, Christ came to Bethania, and was received at the

house of Simon the leper, and, being seated at table with His disciples and Lazarus, whom He had brought to life again, Mary Magdalen came and anointed His feet with precious ointment, and wiped them with her hair, at which Judas murmured, but Christ took the part of Mary Magdalen before many who were there to see Lazarus risen from the dead.

First Point.—Consider the charity and love of the Saviour for His friends, and what great services He did them, as in the case of Lazarus, whom He had restored to life—of Mary, whose sins He had forgiven—Martha, in whose house He had lodged—of Simon, whose leprosy He had cured, and who was on that account called the leper, and when the time of His Passion drew nigh, He would not leave this world without saying good-bye to them, and giving them at least that consolation ; enter thyself into that house, and contemplate what there takes place : see Christ, so benevolent, affable, and pleasing to all, and learn thou also to behave thus towards all ; penetrate into the interior of His soul, and contemplate His love for His friends, His grief at parting with them, and at the pain that His Passion would cause them ; see how He consoles them, and gives them courage to bear it with patience, and learn how to console thy friends, and beg of the Lord not to depart without consoling them also ; and since His charity is so great that His granting some graces is a pledge for future favours, recall to His mind those that He has already granted thee, and beg of Him to do thee many more, as He did to all those persons above mentioned.

Second Point.—Consider, with St. Austin, that Lazarus, risen from the dead and seated at the table with Christ and His disciples, is the type of the converted sinner ; arise thou, my soul, from the death of sin to the life of grace, that thou mayest be worthy to sit at the table of Christ ; despise not sinners, but rather hold converts in high esteem ; see the honour God does them, and honour them thou also, and learn to have great confidence in His

bounty, seeing the manner in which He treats converted sinners.

Third Point.—Consider St. Mary Magdalen burning with love for our Saviour, prostrate at His feet, anointing them with precious balsam, washing them with her tears, and wiping them with her hair, and kissing them with her lips, without separating herself from them, and Christ thus caressed and pleased with these attentions. Beg of this holy woman to make place for thee, and to allow thee to throw thyself at the feet of Christ in her company, to anoint them, to wash them with thy tears, and to wipe them with the flesh of thy heart. Enter, by affection and desire, into partnership with St. Mary Magdalen ; and since the poor represent Christ, and are as the feet of His mystical body, His Church, anoint them, spending on them the precious balsams of thy house, and wash them by curing and cleaning them ; and employ in their service thy hair, covering and dressing them with what is over in thy house, which, according to St. Gregory, is what is signified by the hair, which is the superfluous part of the body.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the witnesses of her actions murmured against Mary, and how Christ defended her, for there is no action so holy that men will not censure, for they ignorantly take for evil that which is good, and murmur against it ; do not be troubled by the murmurings of malicious persons, for God will defend thee as He did Mary Magdalen. Lift thine eyes to heaven, and see what God thinks of thee, and of what thou dost in His service ; let thine intention be good and He will favour thy labour ; offer thyself to His service, beg of Him to grant thee, as He did to this holy sinner, courage and perseverance to follow Him to Mount Calvary and afterwards to the sepulchre.

NINETY-NINTH MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

ON THE SECOND WORD OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS TO DIMAS :

“AMEN, I SAY TO THEE, THIS DAY THOU SHALT BE WITH ME IN PARADISE.”—(LUKE XXIII.)

First Point.—Go, my soul, to the mountain, and ascend by contemplation to Calvary, and thou wilt see thy sweet Spouse suspended from a gibbet between two thieves, as if He were also one,—one of them blasphemes Him, but the other, full of faith, praises and defends Him. The first goes down from the cross into hell, and the second goes up in company of Christ from the cross to heaven. O happy soul! which in so short a time deserved so high a reward. Contemplate its bliss, and learn what will be thine if thou dost persevere with patience on the cross by the side of thy Saviour, and beg His grace not to lose it.

Second Point.—Consider the virtues by which this holy robber deserved to obtain so great a grace from the Saviour, which were, first, his acknowledgment of his sins, confessing them publicly, and crying out aloud that he was suffering deservedly in punishment for them; secondly, the charity that he showed to his neighbour, whom he admonished on hearing him blaspheme against Christ, and whom he exhorted to penance; thirdly, the remarkable confession that he publicly made of the sanctity of Christ at a time when His very disciples denied Him, abandoned Him, and fled; fourthly, the firm hope that he had in the mercy of God, begging of Christ to remember him when He should be in His kingdom, thus confessing Him as king when he saw Him suffering on the cross as a malefactor. O Lord, well does Thy new servant deserve a seat in Thy kingdom, and to enter in Thy company into Paradise. Give me Thy grace to imi-

tate him in his confession, his penance for his sins, and in his other virtues, that I may deserve to go in his company and Thine to enjoy Thee eternally.

Third Point.—Consider the answer that Christ made to his petition, namely, “This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise.” Each word thou wilt find as sweet as honey, and savouring of the Lord’s mercy to this repenting sinner : “This day,” without further delay, thy desire shall be fulfilled, thy joy made perfect ; “thou shalt be,” permanently and as an inhabitant and a lord, not as a stranger or a pilgrim, but as a citizen and resident ; “with me,” in my company, and by my side, as a soldier in my army, as a partner in my kingdom, and as a son and heir, who has a share in the throne of his father, for he that was beside me on the cross shall be with me in my glory ; “in Paradise,”—in any place it would be supreme happiness to be in the company of Christ and in His sight, enjoying His friendship ; what then must be the joy and felicity of being with Him in His glory, and in the Paradise of delights ? The first Adam lost it by his disobedience, and the second regained it by His obedience. The former lost it for himself and for all his posterity, the latter regained it for Himself and for all His followers, and the first to enter into it in His company was Dimas, this happy robber. O happy lot ! O happiness greater than any that a human being had till then enjoyed ! O Lord ! blessed be Thou who so liberally rewardest those that serve Thee, grant me to accompany Thee here on the cross, that I may deserve to be Thy companion hereafter in Paradise.

Fourth Point.—Consider the joy that this holy robber felt in his soul on hearing such a promise from the mouth of the Saviour, the hope that was engendered in his heart by the joy of his soul, the thanks that from his cross he doubtless rendered for so incomparable a favour. How well employed must he have considered his pains and affronts when they obtained so great a happiness as to triumph on that day with Christ over death and hell ;

and learn to suffer trials with patience and joy in the company of the Saviour, to deserve the prize that He has promised and has prepared for them. Consider also the joy of the Saviour at having saved that soul, and dragged it from between the claws of Satan in compensation for the Apostle Judas, who was at that very time being condemned. Congratulate thy Lord, and learn to bring sinners to Him, and to convert them to His service, being convinced that in so doing thou procurest for Him the greatest joy that it is in thy power to procure, and that thou dost alleviate His torments as did on the cross the conversion of Dimas.

HUNDREDTH MEDITATION.

For Holy Tuesday.

ON THE CONDEMNATION PRONOUNCED AGAINST CHRIST,
AND HOW HE WAS LED FORTH WITH THE CROSS ON
HIS SHOULDERS.—(MATT. XXVII.)

First Point.—Consider what took place in the house of Pilate, who, seeing the obstinacy of the people, and their eagerness for the death of Christ, was conquered by their menaces, like an iniquitous judge, and asked for water, with which he washed his hands before the people, saying, I have no share in the blood of this just man, let it flow on your account ; and they all cried out that it should fall on them and on their children : then Pilate condemned Him to death, and, signing the sentence, delivered Him up to be crucified. This was the sentence passed on the Saviour of the world, which was ratified by His Father for the salvation of all the human race, and accepted by Christ in obedience to His command. In all this thou hast much on which to meditate. The enmity of that people, so ungrateful towards their Lord, from whom they had received so many benefits, the

cowardice of the judge who, acknowledging His innocence, iniquitously condemned Him, and thus, whilst washing his hands with water, defiled his soul with the blood of Christ. But above all, contemplate the patience, humility, silence, and obedience of the Saviour in so hard a trial, and see His heart so completely given into the hands of His Eternal Father. Take heed of how He accepts the sentence, as though it were pronounced by His lips and signed by His hand, and learn obedience in difficult things, and in what is repugnant to the flesh, and patience in all thy trials, for they can never be so great as this.

Second Point.—Consider how, on hearing this sentence, the enemies of Christ, filled with joy and exultation at having carried out their purpose, called the soldiers, brought the cross, blew the trumpets, assembled the people, and hastened to send the Saviour out of the world. See what takes place in that house, how the Spouse of thy soul is stripped of His purple garment, and exhibited, covered with wounds; then, having dressed Him in His own tunic, they place a cord round His neck. Oh, what a necklace of gold for Him to appear in at His espousals! Contemplate the joy of the Saviour on seeing that cross desired for so many years; with what words of delight must He not have saluted it, with what affection must He not have embraced it, and with what tenderness accepted it, shedding tears of joy at seeing Himself so near the consummation of the sacrifice that He was to make on it of Himself to His Eternal Father. Learn from this Master how thou shouldst receive the crosses that God may send thee; look not on persecutions, trials, and injuries as coming from the hands of men, but from those of God, who sends them for thy crown, and accept them, as Christ accepted His cross, with patience and joy.

Third Point.—Consider how the procession was then formed under that dolorous standard. The trumpets were sounded, the people in large bodies assembled, the spears and lances shining, the banner floating on high, the drums

beating, and, in the midst of all, the Saviour between two thieves, a heavy cross on His shoulders, which St. Bonaventure¹ tells us was fifteen feet long. Then the herald raised his voice and proclaimed that Man to be condemned to death as a blasphemer, a malefactor, and a homicide. In such manner did this obedient Isaac go forth with the wood on His shoulders, to be sacrificed on Mount Calvary for the redemption of the world. Contemplate, devout soul, how thy Redeemer goes out thus for thee; see if thy sufferings equal His, and whether thou hast arrived at the state and term that He has reached. Follow Him, and do not leave Him; and since He invites and calls thee, take thy cross and travel with Him, keeping Him company.

Fourth Point.—According to general opinion, the distance from Pilate's house to Mount Calvary was 1020 paces, and as the road was so long, and Christ so wounded and weakened by the loss of blood, He fell with the weight of His cross. O my soul, approach to raise Him, and beg of Him to give thee His cross that He may have at least some alleviation in so long a road. But those soldiers were so inhuman that they struck and beat Him to make Him rise, as though He had been an animal, and being fearful lest He should die before He reached Calvary, they hired a man to carry His cross. O fortunate labourer! who would not be anxious to purchase of thee this opportunity of carrying it? O sweet Jesus! what was he paid for carrying Thy cross? I offer myself, O Lord, to carry it without any payment; rather I would give all that I have, and would sell myself, and give myself in return, for being allowed to carry it; give it me, my Lord awhile, for I desire but to procure Thee some rest and alleviation. Meditate on what took place in this journey, for Christ Himself² revealed to a devout soul that all those who devoutly meditate on His Passion, and, in spirit, help Him to carry His cross, alleviate His torments.

¹ Bonaven. Medit. lxxvii.

² Ludolph de vit. Christi, in princ.

HUNDRED AND FIRST MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

ON THE THIRD WORD THAT CHRIST SPOKE ON THE CROSS TO HIS HOLY MOTHER, "WOMAN, BEHOLD THY SON," AND TO THE DISCIPLE, "BEHOLD THY MOTHER."—(JOHN XIX.)

First Point.—Consider the courage of the Queen of Angels, who never abandoned her beloved Son; and, accompanying Him on Calvary, she was not broken down or fainting from excess of sorrow, but she stood firm and constant by the side of her Son to assist and serve Him; and, as Zenon says, she offered Him in sacrifice to the Eternal Father with greater courage than that of Abraham when he offered Isaac. Rejoice at her great constancy, and beg of the Lord grace to imitate her, and offer Him in sacrifice thy heart and all that thou lovest in this world, as she offered her most beloved Son for the world.

Second Point.—Consider the grief of Christ at seeing the most bitter dolours of His most holy Mother, and that of the Mother seeing her Son suffer such torments. Her soul was crucified with Him, and hung on the cross with most tender compassion; the nails transfixing her heart, and all the torments that Christ suffered in His body, the most Blessed Virgin felt in her soul through the love she bore Him. O most pure Virgin, why comest thou to Calvary to taste the bitter myrrh of His passion? what brought thee amidst thieves and murderers, if it were not the love that thou bearest thy most holy and precious Son, and the yearnings and desires of thy heart to die with Him. Agar had not courage to see her son Ismael die, and therefore she separated herself from him, and left him in the arms of death, but thou, O Lady, surpasses all in valour, and thou chooseth to be at the foot of the

cross, and at the side of His hard pillow, to see Him, and in spirit die with Him ; take me with thee, that I may also learn to die for His love.

Third Point.—Consider the words that Christ spoke to His Blessed Mother, “Woman, behold thy Son.” He calls her woman and not mother, not to augment her grief, and to show that she had stripped herself of her motherly love in that terrible hour, to sacrifice her Son to God ; and He takes charge of her honour and comfort, by leaving her a vicar and substitute for Himself, who shall serve in His place, and treat her as his mother, and in his person Christ recommended to her all the children of the Church, and thee also, whom He then had in mind. O Lord, many thanks I give Thee for the mercy that Thou didst me in giving me such a mother, and remembering me in the hour of Thy Passion, and Thou didst also teach me from the pulpit of Thy cross to honour my parents until death, as Thou honouredst Thine. Give me grace to fulfil the precept that Thou gavest me, not only in words, but in deeds, by putting it in practice.

Fourth Point.—Consider the last words that Christ said to St. John, “Behold thy mother.” Oh, what consolation must not the beloved disciple have felt in the midst of such grief at hearing that sentence from the mouth of the Lord ! Oh, what a jewel thy Master on leaving this world has confided to thee, O holy John ! It is of more value than all that the world esteems. He always loved thee, but at the end He gave a proof of the delicacy of His love. O my soul ! leave not the foot of the cross ; in the name of the beloved disciple, “Behold thy mother.” Such she is and will for ever be ; receive her as such, love her, serve and respect her, for if thou be a true son, thou wilt find her a most true mother to thee.

*HUNDRED AND SECOND MEDITATION.**For Holy Wednesday.*

ON THE DISCOURSE THAT CHRIST HELD WITH THE HOLY WOMEN WHO WERE WEeping BY THE ROAD AS HE WENT TO CALVARY.—(LUKE XXIII.)

First Point.—Consider that, as St. Bonaventure says,¹ the Blessed Virgin,—who with St. John, St. Mary Magdalen, and the other holy women, was not able to see Christ, when He went out carrying His cross, on account of the immense concourse of people,—took a different route, and, with her holy companions, awaited His arrival at the gate of the city, in a position whence they could see and speak with Him; and when the Saviour arrived at that place, the greatness of grief silenced their voices, and they spoke only with their eyes, shedding floods of tears; there those two loving ones looked on each other, and their hearts alone spoke, conforming themselves to the will of the Most High, whom they obeyed in all things. Contemplate, in this circumstance, what must have been the feelings of the Queen of Angels, at seeing her most precious Son condemned and in the hands of murderers, and what an echo must the voice of the heralds that sounded in her ears, the cries of the people, the words and insults of the mob that condemned and blasphemed Him, have made in her heart. O most holy Virgin! retire to thy solitude, robbers and murderers are no fit company for thee; but how couldst thou retire and leave in such hands the beloved of thy heart, and the Author of life! Oh, what a painful meeting was this for both! Oh, would that I knew how, and were able to console and serve thee!

Second Point.—Consider the words that the Saviour spoke on this occasion to the devout women who wept

¹ Bonaven., *ubi supra*.

over Him “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold the days shall come, wherein they will say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that have not borne, and the paps that have not given suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us: and to the hills, Cover us. For if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?” These words that Christ spoke with deep feeling are all worthy of much consideration. In what could tears be better or more worthily employed than in weeping over the Passion of the Saviour? And yet Christ tells them not to weep over Him, but over the spiritual and temporal ruin of their city; in which He manifests the greatness of His charity, since He considers the trials of others before His own, and teaches them to weep first over themselves and then over others, and at the same time foretells to them the punishment which threatens them for the terrible sin that was then being committed. Ruminates these words of the Saviour, which are as a honeycomb of most tender devotion, and salutary food of the spiritual life. Learn to compassionate and weep over the misfortunes of thy neighbours, and to bewail thine own faults and sins; and, whilst considering the sufferings that thy Redeemer underwent for the sins of others, see the punishment which awaits thee for thine, and, in accordance with this lesson, turn thy steps towards heaven.

Third Point.—Consider how one of those devout women, receiving courage and strength from God, broke through the mob, and approached the Saviour with a piece of fine linen, and wiped the sweat from His face; and, to recompense this good office, the Redeemer left impressed on that cloth the image of His face, paying her with that precious relic for the service she had done Him. O good Jesus! how liberal Thou art with Thy servants, and how surely Thou payest the services that Thou receivest, and for so slight a consolation Thou givest a prize of such great value. Consider how rich and con-

soled that holy woman remained with the image of the Redeemer. Approach thou, and offer Him the flesh of thy heart, that He may imprint thereon His Divine resemblance, and that it may always remain printed on thy soul, without being ever effaced or forgotten by thee.

Fourth Point.—Lay great stress on the consideration of all this, and contemplate the road that the Redeemer takes for thy sake, and the people that accompany Him ; then lift thine eyes to heaven, and see another procession, but a different one,—the angels that assist Him and sing various canticles of praise for the virtues that He practises, and for what He suffers for men, saying, with celestial harmony, The Lamb is worthy of divinity, *salvation, kingdom, glory*, and of reigning for ever, because He gives His life for the salvation of the world ; the cross is changed into a throne of majesty, and death into life. This was what the angels sung at the moment when on earth He was being proclaimed a malefactor, and worthy of death. Console thyself by thinking of the reward that awaits Him, and excite thyself, by His example, to suffer injuries, crosses, and death to obtain eternal life.

HUNDRED AND THIRD MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

ON THE FOURTH WORD OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?"—(MATT. XXVII. ; LUKE XXIII.)

First Point.—Consider what the holy Evangelist says, that, from the hour of tierce to that of noon, that is, during three hours, the sun was darkened, and all the world was enveloped in night, the creature thus compassionating its Creator, and putting on mourning for the death of its Lord, as though shutting its eyes not to see such an enor-

mous crime as that which men were then committing against their Redeemer. O my soul ! how much hast thou here to learn and imitate, to tremble and weep over. If inanimate creatures compassionate thy God, and, without having sense, give signs of grief at His Passion, see how much more reason thou hast for compassionating Him, and showing lively marks of sorrow and grief for what He endures for thee ; and if the sun covers its eyes not to see that sin, see how many times thou crucifiest Him with thine, and tremble lest He close them and deny thee light to see thy faults, and thus, blind in the darkness of thy guilt, thou be precipitated into an abyss of wickedness, and thence into hell.

Second Point.—Consider what the Evangelist says, that, about the hour of noon, which was that of His death, Christ cried out in a loud voice, to show us that He had not lost His consciousness, but was perfectly possessed of all His faculties, and to warn us also of the anguish and suffering that His soul endured on that cross, for that loud voice was an indication of deep sorrow ; see what He felt for thy many sins, and what He experienced at finding Himself forsaken on that occasion, for He declared it in a loud voice ; and grieve that thou hast left thy Saviour, and forgotten Him in the midst of so many torments. O Lord, my only good ! it grieves me to have been the cause of such anguish and grief ; I offer Thee now to forget myself rather than to neglect Thee henceforth, and to suffer all the torments that the world can inflict, rather than to abandon Thee in Thy tribulations.

Third Point.—Meditate on the words of Christ, which were, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ?” The repetition of the same words, as St. Jerome remarks, is a sign of grief, and Christ shows us the great sorrow that He felt by repeating the words, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ?” It was great grief to Him to be abandoned by His people, on whom He had conferred so many benefits ; still greater was it to be

abandoned by His disciples, to whom He had given His own blood ; but that His Father should forsake Him in His ocean of anguish, this surpassed all. Man, by sin, deserved to be deserted by God, for he that abandons God, deserves to be abandoned by Him ; and as Christ took on Himself all the punishment, and chose to suffer for man, He took also this on Himself, and was forsaken by His Father in the midst of such pains and anguish in order that man might not be abandoned. For me, Lord, thou didst undergo the greatest torment of all, which was to see Thyself abandoned by Thy own Father in the midst of Thy sufferings. I give Thee a thousand thanks for it, and I beg of Thee a new favour, which is, not to permit me to be abandoned by Thee ; look not on my sins, for by them I deserve that Thou shouldst desert me, but consider Thy mercy, have pity on me, and do not forsake me.

Fourth Point.—Contemplate Christ in His dereliction, and turn thine eyes on thyself, and learn the lesson which from the pulpit of His cross He reads thee in these words ; if God forsook His Son in all His torments to suffer without alleviation, as far as it was possible for Him to forsake Him, be not surprised if He abandons thee in thy trials for thy greater reward, and as the Redeemer was not discouraged in this desertion, but rather had recourse to His Father in most fervent prayer, calling on Him with great love again and again, be not thou discouraged in thy troubles, but have firm confidence in the Lord, and turn to Him in prayer, multiplying thy cries, thy clamours, and thy sighs, and be confident that thou wilt be heard, and wilt obtain favour at His hands, as did His most holy Son.

*HUNDRED AND FOURTH MEDITATION.**For Holy Thursday.*

HOW CHRIST WAS CRUCIFIED ON CALVARY.
(MATT. XXVII.)

First Point.—This is the most painful station in which thou hast to accompany thy Saviour. Being arrived with Him on Calvary, contemplate what there takes place, and what He suffers there for thee. The Redeemer reached Calvary fatigued with so long a journey, and the resting-place that He found was the hard bed of His cross. It was the custom on these occasions to give the condemned person some soothing drink, that they might be able to endure with more courage and valour that trying hour; and the inhuman executioners mixing some wine with most bitter gall, offered it to Christ, not to comfort Him, but to augment His suffering by the bitterness of the drink; He tasted it, and embittered His taste, but did not drink it; He took what was bitter to the taste to compensate for the taste that Adam took of the forbidden fruit, and He refused to drink, that He might suffer without any kind of relief for our love. O my soul! thy sweet Spouse is fatigued and tired, give Him some relief in His labours, and do not give Him the gall of thy sins; for that is what greatly embitters His taste, and what He cannot drink. O good Jesus, Thou gavest Thy people milk and honey, and they, in Thy dire necessity, give Thee in return gall to drink: Blessed be Thou, who chocest to suffer so entirely without comfort for me, who have embittered Thy palate.

Second Point.—Consider how they then took off His clothes with great cruelty, and as they had adhered to His wounds, these were all re-opened, and pieces of His flesh were dragged off with His garments, and He remained thus, all one wound, in the presence of the whole

multitude, and of the Most Holy Virgin, whose heart was again pierced with a sword of grief. And St. Bonaventure tells us that, seeing Him thus naked, she tore from her head the veil that covered it, and breaking with inconceivable courage through the mob, covered Him decently. Consider with what gratitude Christ would accept this attention, and what thanks He would render her for that gift. Contemplate at this point what those two celestial luminaries must have then endured, and see the second and most perfect Adam with the second Eve in the paradise of Calvary, covering His nakedness for shame, not for His sins but for thine, who hast so often offended Him. Thy God and thy Lord is stripped; approach to clothe and cover Him with compassion for what He suffers for thee, clothing His poor with thy possessions, even though for that it be necessary to take the veil from thy head, as did the Queen of Heaven to cover Christ, and for which He gave her an imperial crown of glory.

Third Point.—Look around thee, and see how they stretch the cross on the ground, and bore three holes in it, and then lay the Redeemer on that hard bed, not on soft mattresses, but on the bare wood; and for pillow to rest His head on He has His crown of thorns, that tears His veins; fix thy gaze, and further contemplate the cruelty with which four of His torturers seize His hands and His feet, and, taking their hammers and nails, fasten Him to that rough wood, streams of blood flowing from these fresh wounds to wash away thy sins, and see how the echo of each blow as it struck the Saviour sounded in the heart of His beloved Mother, who shed floods of tears, bitter tears, as her Son shed His blood. Approach thou, my soul, to gather up that blood with Mary Magdalen, and to assist and console them both; place thyself at His feet, and do not leave them alone in such bitter suffering in the midst of their enemies; wash with thy tears the wounds of the Saviour before He is raised on the cross, when thou wilt not be able to touch Him.

Fourth Point.—Until now thou hast seen the Saviour on the earth, but it is now time to lift up thine eyes and to contemplate Him lifted up on the tree of His cross, whence He said that He should draw all things to Himself. Beg of Him not to leave thy heart on earth, but to draw it up after Him. Consider what takes place there, how they tied ropes to the cross, and raised it up on high, little by little, the Saviour being already nailed to it; and then, as they were so inhuman, they let it fall suddenly into the hole prepared for it; His holy body thus trembling in the air, His bones being displaced and dis-jointed in many places, with inconceivable suffering; and so great was the torture He then endured, that, as He revealed to St. Bridget, it was the greatest that He suffered in all His Passion. The heavens gazed on that sight, the angels were struck with awe and admiration, and the Eternal Father witnessed the justice that was wrought on His Son for thy sins. O my God! the slave sinned, and the Master pays the penalty! Here below, the slave is often made to suffer for the sins of others, and by his punishment justice is often satisfied, but in Thee the law is reversed, and the Lord is made to suffer. Blessed be Thy name a thousand times, that such an inheritance of charity was found in Thee. Contem-plate, my soul, the sufferings that thy Saviour underwent for thee on the bed of His cross. He hangs on three nails, and has no place on which to rest; if He lays His weight on His feet they are torn by the nails, if on His arms, the holes in His hands are cruelly rent, and if He would rest His head, the crown of thorns prevents Him. O good Jesus! blessed and praised be Thou for the love that Thou didst bear us; and for what Thou sufferedst for us may the angels give Thee thanks, for I know not how; would that I were crucified with Thee! Give me Thy grace that, at least, I may compassionate Thy sufferings as I ought, and that I may never give Thee, by my sins, any further occasion of suffering for me.

HUNDRED AND FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

ON THE FIFTH WORD OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS, "I THIRST."
(JOHN XIX.)

First Point.—Consider the care that Christ always had of the fame of His prophets, and the zeal that He had for the fulfilment of their words; since the Evangelist tells us that, being in that terrible hour surrounded on all sides with torments, sorrows, and affronts, in order that the Scriptures and the prophecies of David should be accomplished, which said that in His thirst they would give Him vinegar to drink, He cried out, and said that He thirsted, and one of those that heard Him, taking a sponge, dipped it in gall and vinegar, and, placing it on a rod, held it to His mouth, but He did not drink of it, and thus the Scriptures were accomplished. Take note of the care and zeal of the Saviour for the fulfilment of the Scriptures, and for the good name of His prophets, and give Him thanks for it; and also learn the esteem in which thou shouldst hold them, and the words that they pronounce.

Second Point.—Consider how that thirst of our Lord was natural, from the great quantity of blood that He had shed. Compassionate His thirst, the torment of which was so great, that it was the only one that He spoke a word of, as though to ask for some alleviation; and such was His poverty that, in that hour, He had not a drop of water with which to refresh His tongue, and He, who is the Fountain of living water, and who sends from the skies, rivers, and fountains to fertilise the earth, taking such care of others, neglects Himself, so as not to reserve one drop of water to appease His thirst. O good Jesus, how Thou condemnest our sensuality in foreseeing with such care, and furnishing so abundantly for all our

wants, it were better that we should die of thirst, and that Thou shouldst have the abundance to satisfy Thy thirst that we have for our pleasures. I blush with shame in Thy presence at seeing how far off I am from following Thee. O my soul ! learn to consider others, and to neglect thyself, to give to thy neighbour if he be in need, as Christ did for us.

Third Point.—Consider what the Blessed Virgin, and the glorious St. John, and the holy women who accompanied her, must have felt hearing that the Saviour thirsted, and being unable to succour Him. O Queen of Heaven, who so often gavest Him the milk of thy breasts, what grief must it not have been for thy heart to see thy most precious Son suffer that burning thirst which tormented Him in that hour, and to be unable to assist Him. O my soul, thy sweet Spouse is consumed with thirst, and calls on thee to give Him drink, not so much of material water as the spiritual refreshment of thine advancement in virtue ; it is for thy soul that He thirsts : give Him to drink, for nought will satisfy Him of all thou canst give, if thou givest not thyself.

Fourth Point.—Consider how in this need they gave Christ gall of vinegar to drink, and, having tasted, He would not drink it. Oh, unheard-of cruelty ! Oh, inhumanity greater than that of savages ! who ever before heard of such a thing as to give gall and vinegar to drink in the burning thirst of one in the agonies of death ? If ever thou findest thyself in great distress, and no one will have pity on thee, thou wilt find consolation in what the Saviour here suffers with such patience. Learn to have pity on the thirst, the hunger, and the need that He suffers in His poor ; when thou givest to His poor thou dost minister to His thirst. Mix not with that drink the gall of hard words, nor the bitterness of ill-treatment, for that would be giving Him to drink gall and vinegar ; but, as St. Bernard says, let thy charity be greater even than thy gift.

*HUNDRED AND SIXTH MEDITATION.**For Good Friday.*

ON WHAT CHRIST SUFFERED ON THE CROSS.—(MATT. XXII.;
LUKE XXIII.)

First Point.—This day is entirely dedicated to the station on Calvary, from which it is right that thou shouldst not stir one step. Take thy place under the shadow of the cross, by which is redeemed what was lost through the tree of Paradise, and of which it is said by the holy Spouse, "I sat down under his shadow whom I desired" (Cant. ii.). Lift thine eyes to the summit of that tree, and thou wilt see the bunch of grapes from the vineyard of Engaddi hanging from its boughs, and thy sweet Spouse between two thieves, reputed as one of them. Recall to thy mind the history of His past life, and thou wilt find that He was born in a poor hut in the country between two animals, that He lived in poverty with the humble, that His society was that of common men, and that now He dies between two thieves, condemning thus our pride, which makes us constantly seek the society of the noble, and endeavour to obtain an honoured name on earth. Learn the lesson that He teaches from that pulpit, and beg of Him His grace to practise it.

Second Point.—Lift up thine eyes and read the inscription that is placed over Christ on His cross, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." This is the cause of His death, and for this is He condemned. Meditate each word separately,—Jesus, which signifies Saviour, and because He was the Saviour of the world and thine, He is condemned to so bitter and terrible a death. O my sweet and only good! how much did my salvation cost Thee! how much Thou didst for me, and how little do I for Thee! Nazarene, which means flowery, the flower of

heaven and earth is amidst thorns ; and because Thou didst flourish in so many virtues and miracles, Thou art crowned with them, and condemned to such torments. Learn to have patience if thou be persecuted for doing good, and for serving God with virtue. King, for, being the king of heaven and earth, He is condemned by His subjects. Consider Him crowned in heaven with the crown of immortality, obeyed by all His creatures and adored by all His courtiers, and then consider Him on the cross. Compare one throne with the other,—one crown with the other, one sceptre with the other, the obedience of His heavenly subjects with the treachery of these who surround His cross, the glory that He enjoys there with the sufferings that He undergoes here, and grieve to see Him so humbled and despised for thy sins.

Third Point.—Listen to the blasphemies and curses of the priests and the common people, who mock Him, and scoff at Him, calling Him a false prophet, a cheat, and a liar, and telling Him to come down from the cross if He be the Son of God, cursing Him as a condemned man. We deserve to be cursed for our sins, and He took on Himself our malediction to give us the benediction of His Father, and with it the inheritance of God. Give Him thanks for so great a mercy, and cease not to praise and bless Him, repairing His honour, and restoring His good name as far as in thee lies, blessing Him at the same time as sinners offend and blaspheme Him.

Fourth Point.—Look on the soldiers who had Him crucified, seated at the foot of His cross, dividing His garments, and drawing lots for the tunic made by the hand of the Queen of Angels. Contemplate His feelings when He saw it carried off by a torturer and a murderer to be worn publicly by him,—appearing thus like Christ externally, and being in the interior a robber full of great wickedness. This feeling He experiences, this torment He again undergoes at the hands of those who with hypocrisy pretend to the exterior of virtue, and in their interior are wicked sinners, who offend Him at every step.

Approach and redeem the garments of the Saviour, buy them of the murderers, even if for that it be necessary to sell thyself to pay for them, and be thus able to bring them back to the Blessed Virgin, who will receive them, and will esteem them as most precious relics of her most Holy Son, and thou wilt thus somewhat alleviate her sufferings. O Queen of Heaven! who would not willingly sell themselves to buy those garments, and replace them in thy hands to console and serve thee, and have some share in mitigating the grief of thy most Holy Son and thine own? O blessed be thou, who sufferedst so much for our good!

HUNDRED AND SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the same Day.

ON THE LAST WORDS OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS BEFORE HE EXPIRED.—(MATT. XXVII. ; JOHN XIX. ; LUKE XXIII.)

First Point.—Consider that Christ, knowing that the hour approached in which He was to leave this world to go to His Father, spoke that mysterious word, *Consummatum est*,—the work of our redemption is entirely accomplished and consummated,—in which He declared how He had fulfilled the work with which His Father had charged Him. The old law, with its ceremonies and rites, is terminated, the obedience of Christ to His Father is consummated, His sufferings are ended, and the chalice of His Passion, which His Father had commanded Him to drink, has been drained,—all has been accomplished, and now it only remains to depart freely for paradise. O King of glory! many thanks I render thee for having carried through to the end the work of my redemption; and I beseech Thee not to let it be lost in me, but that Thy precious blood may bring forth fruit, and that I may seek the kingdom where Thou reignest.

Second Point.—Learn from this word of Christ to carry on to the end the works of the Lord, and not to fall off in the work of thy salvation, but to fight until death, and to persevere in doing good until death, according to the example of thy Redeemer (Matt. xxii.), because it is written that he that perseveres to the end shall be saved, and that he who falls away shall be lost. Beg of Him by the virtue of His perseverance in the work of our redemption grace to persevere unto the end in the good begun, and not to be found wanting in any point of His service.

Third Point.—Consider the last words that the Saviour uttered, “Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.” He gave back His soul into the hands of His Father, from whom He received it, adorned with many and most heroic virtues, and enriched with the very illustrious works that He performed during His life. Contemplate the resignation with which He placed Himself in the hands of His Father, prepared to die a thousand other deaths if it were necessary for the good of mankind, and with what pleasure the Eternal Father accepted so rich and agreeable an offering. Enter into account with thyself, and see how thou wilt give back thy soul to God when the hour for returning it to Him arrives; whether thou wilt give it back improved, or deteriorated with many and grievous sins, and prepare at once for that hour by learning to die a death like that of the Saviour of the world.

Fourth Point.—Consider how, on saying these words, that most holy soul detached itself from its body, and passed to His Eternal Father, terminating thus His most blessed life, whilst His body remained martyred on the cross. Contemplate the grief that the Blessed Virgin must have felt at seeing her most blessed and precious Son expire in so many and such grievous torments, and how she must have desired to die in His company, and accompany Him in that passage, as she had in every other action of His life. Take note of the grief that all His

creatures showed at His death ; the sun was darkened, the rocks were rent asunder, the tombs opened, and the very dead gave signs of grief, the veil of the Temple was torn from top to bottom, and the good men on earth struck their breasts ; men obstinate in their sins gave alone no signs of sorrow ; be not thou one of them, nor let thy heart be harder than the rocks ; recollect thyself in the presence of thy God, and meditate on what He suffered for thee ; remember that thou owest Him thy life, and consider how to pay Him ; contemplate Him on the cross dead for thy sake, weep over the tragedy which thou hast caused in the Saviour of the world, and consider how thou canst show thy gratitude, and, in some measure, make up to Him for what He suffered for thee.

HUNDRED AND EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For Holy Saturday.

HOW CHRIST WAS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS.
(MATT. XXVII. ; JOHN XIX.)

First Point.—Consider how the sorrow and grief of Christ's most holy Mother were not ended by His death, for whilst she stood at the foot of the cross, a soldier aimed his lance at the most Holy body of Christ, and with one blow opened His side, from which came forth blood and water, which fell on the head of His most pious Mother ; then, as St. Bernard says, was fulfilled the prophecy of holy Simeon, when he told her that a sword of sorrow should pierce her soul, inasmuch as the lance did not transpierce with pain the soul of Christ, which was no longer in His body, but that of the Blessed Virgin, which was transpierced and wounded by that harsh blow. Oh, what grief was hers, and what the complaints of that most chaste dove, at seeing that not even after death did the

fury of His enemies spare her most Blessed Son, and, raising her voice to heaven, she then offered Him afresh in sacrifice. Draw near, my soul, with devotion, and accompany her lamentation, and show thy compassion in her sorrows, which is the greatest alleviation thou canst offer her.

Second Point.—Pass not rapidly over this event, but note with St. Austin that the Evangelist does not say that the soldier *wounded* the body of Christ with the lance, but that he “*opened His side,*” because he opened the door, until then shut, of paradise, that we might enter through it; He opened the way unto eternal life, and the safe haunts in which chaste doves may build their nests in the hole of the rock. Christ laid open, thus, the fountain of living waters, from which flow streams of milk and honey of sweetest devotion, and of blood and water for the purification of the world from the stains of sin. Lose not this opportunity, but approach with humility and devotion to purify thyself from thine; enter that abode, make thy dwelling there, and thou wilt find safety, consolation, devotion, strength, and joy in all thy labours, and firmest hope of obtaining by them eternal life.

Third Point.—Consider the Queen of Heaven at the foot of the cross become, with her holy companions, the guardian of the body of her Son, unable to take Him down, and having no place wherein to bury Him. Her dolorous heart, doubtless, cried aloud to the Eternal Father to have pity on her in that her need, and forthwith He heard her prayer, and moved the heart of Joseph of Arimathea,—noble decurion and hidden disciple of the Saviour,—who courageously, and without allowing himself to be terrified by fear of the Jews, begged of Pilate the body of the Saviour, and permission being obtained, he came with all things necessary to take down the body of Christ from the cross and bury it. Consider how God succours His own in the greatest necessities, and draw therefrom confidence that thou wilt find Him propitious to thee in thine. Learn also from this

holy centurion to despise all human respect, in order to serve the Lord ; meditate with attention the gratitude with which he was received by the most Blessed Virgin, the thanks that all her companions would give him, and the courteous manner in which he would approach the Holy Virgin, to offer his condolence at the death of her Son, and to offer himself to her service, at the same time asking her permission to take Christ down from the cross and bury Him ; be attentive to all that takes place, and draw thence devotion and holy lessons for thy soul.

Fourth Point.—See, then, and contemplate how those noble and devout men, Joseph and Nicodemus, with their own hands, and not trusting this office to their friends or servants, placed ladders against the cross, and with hammers and pincers withdrew the nails from the most holy body of the Saviour, and with the aid of the linen which they had brought for that purpose, let it down with great devotion and reverence, and delivered it to His dolorous and afflicted mother, who embraced it with tenderest love—pressing lips to lips, eyes to eyes, forehead to forehead, the thorns of His crown running into her head ; and, as a lioness, groaning over her dead Son with anxious desire to restore Him to life. O most holy Virgin ! thy anguish is greater than the ocean, thy sorrows ended not with those of thy Son, for they are now renewed as at the beginning ; and all that holy company joined her in her lament. St. Bonaventure tells us that St. Mary Magdalen embraced His feet, where she had found redemption, and again washed them with tears and wiped them with her hair, and that St. John kissed the breast on which he had reposed so shortly before. Approach thou also, my soul, and, profiting by this opportunity, embrace the Lord, and bewail the ravage thy sins have wrought on His person.

*HUNDRED AND NINTH MEDITATION.**For the same Day.*ON THE BURIAL OF CHRIST, AND THE SOLITUDE OF THE
BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.—(JOHN XIX.)

First Point.—Consider how, night approaching, those noble men endeavoured, with holy and discreet discourses, to mitigate the grief of the Queen of Angels, and begged her to allow them to entomb the Saviour ; and the holy Virgin, as St. Germanus¹ of Jerusalem says, showing her great courage, assisted in swathing the body, cleaning away the blood from the wounds, withdrawing the thorns from the head, arranging the beard and hair, and disposing the winding-sheet with her holy companions, anointing also that most holy body with the precious ointments brought by the two pious men. Be present at this scene, and beg leave to aid in this pious ministration.

Second Point.—Consider how the burial was then performed, the Author of life being borne a corpse ; how they deposited Him in that tomb of rock, and covered Him with a stone. There the heart of His loving mother remained buried ; there the sun of her joy went down, and the frightful darkness of sorrow remained ; there began her solitude, and her bitter grief took fresh increase, and, as the dove that has lost its mate, she wailed disconsolately for the Beloved of her heart, in the words of Jeremias : “O all ye that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow.” To thee she says these words ; abandon her not in her loneliness, but go down with her, and console her with devout

¹ S. Germanus, de cap. Virg.

feeling. O Virgin of virgins ! would that I could give consolation to thy desolation, companionship to thy solitude, and relief to thy sorrow. Here I offer thee all that I am, my soul and my life, to thy service ; dispose of me according to thy will, and let me be so happy as to give some alleviation to thy grief.

Third Point.—Contemplate with St. Bonaventure how the most holy Virgin returned from the sepulchre, which was near, and, with extreme reverence, adored the most precious wood of the cross, being the first to give us the example, and teach us its worship and veneration. See her on her knees at its foot, and learn the lesson she imparts of acknowledgment and reverence towards the instruments of our redemption.

Fourth Point.—Contemplate how she dismissed those holy men, and the words with which she thanked them for the compassion they had shown towards their Divine Master, which were similar to those that David addressed to the men who buried Saul, “Blessed be you to the Lord, who have shewn this mercy to your Master” (2 Kings ii.). The holy Virgin would then pray them to go and take some repose, and they, with great courtesy and devotion, would not leave her till they had accompanied her to her house. The night was now come, and the town was talking of nothing else but the events of the day ; the streets and public places were, doubtless, filled with groups, in which some spoke good, but the greater number evil, of the Redeemer, and of His death, and the words of all would be as poignards that pierced the heart of the holy Virgin. O what a dolorous journey was this, that the Blessed Virgin made, thus lonely, without her Son, although surrounded by her devout companions ! Arrived at her house, the pious noblemen took leave of the Queen of Heaven, who withdrew to her apartment, where, all night, and the whole day following, she remained in communion with God, to Whom she addressed her conversation, offering Him her life and soul with that of

her most blessed Son. Accompany her, my soul, in this solitude by meditation, compassionating her sorrows, and learning from her constancy and holiness to bear thine with equanimity, and to offer thyself for greater combats in the service of the Lord.

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THE END.

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DAILY MEDITATIONS.

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DAILY MEDITATIONS
ON THE
MYSTERIES OF OUR HOLY FAITH

AND ON THE
LIVES OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST
AND OF THE SAINTS.

Third Part

CONTAINS

MEDITATIONS FROM EASTER SUNDAY TO THE TENTH SUNDAY
AFTER PENTECOST.

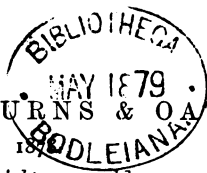
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✠ **HENRICUS EDWARDUS,**
Card. Archiep. Westmonast.

DAILY MEDITATIONS.

FIRST MEDITATION.

For Easter Sunday.

HOW CHRIST, AFTER DESCENDING INTO LIMBO, AND DELIVERING THE SOULS OF THE HOLY FATHERS, APPEARED TO HIS MOST HOLY MOTHER.

First Point.—Consider how, when Christ had consummated the work of our redemption, His Body remained on the Cross, whilst His most holy Soul, united with the Divinity, went down into Limbo, a place in the centre of the earth, to fulfil the desires of those souls who had awaited Him so many centuries, and how He illumined those dungeons more effectually than any sun, and made them glorious by His presence. Contemplate the joy of those saints at seeing the fulfilment of their long-delayed hopes; with what delight they would receive Him, in what words they would express their gratitude for so incomparable a benefit, and how well spent they would consider their labours and sorrow at the delay of the promise, now that they saw it so abundantly fulfilled without fear of diminution. Take courage by their example to hope in the Lord, and never to be faint-hearted even if He delay, for His promises are infallible, and His rewards greater than any we could ask for.

III.

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Second Point.—Consider how our Redeemer, having delivered those saints from their captivity, and having communicated to them a share of His glory, returned to the sepulchre where lay His most Holy Body, and in the presence of all that holy company of blessed spirits which He brought with Him, reunited Himself to it, and so glorified it that it became more beautiful than the sun, moon, or stars, or any created thing, and came forth alive and glorious from the tomb, without being hindered, as Lazarus was, by the stone that closed the entrance. Consider the glory of the Lord, what congratulations He received from all those saints, and what grateful thanks they rendered Him for having saved them at so great a cost to Himself, He who could have redeemed them by His only word. Harken to the music of the angels singing victory, and take note of all that must have occurred. See what a reward is prepared for sufferings endured with patience for the love of God, and what a crown awaits the victorious; resolve to fight valiantly the battles of the Lord, enduring patiently, for His love, whatever trials assail thee, in the hope of receiving the reward for them from His divine hand; and leave not His presence without congratulating Him a thousand times for His glory, rejoicing in it much more than if it were thine own.

Third Point.—Consider and weigh all that has been said, and ponder, for the profit of thy soul, how Christ might easily have released and raised the Holy Fathers from the dead by a single word, as He brought to life Lazarus and the son of the widow of Naim; or by the voice of an angel, as He will raise up the whole world at the last day; and how He would not do so otherwise than in Person, first, for the increase of their joy, then, in order to triumph over hell, and lastly, to teach us to visit and console in person the afflicted in prisons, hospitals, or exile, and to comfort them in their griefs, as did the friends of holy Job. Contemplate the four qualities that Christ communicated to His Body, which

were agility, subtilty, light, and impassibility ; and turning thine eyes on thyself, entreat Him to raise thee up from the death of sin to the life of grace, and to communicate these four qualities to thy soul. Agility, that is, fervour and readiness in His service ; subtilty, to overcome all obstacles, not allowing thyself to be deterred by any ; light, to discover thyself to thy spiritual guide and director, hiding nothing that concerns thy conscience ; and impassibility, never to return to sin, but to preserve the life of grace wholly without stain, even as Christ arose to die no more.

Fourth Point.—Consider with St. Bonaventure how the Redeemer of the world went at once without delay to visit and console His most Holy Mother, who, as the same saint remarks, was praying in retirement, and affectionately beseeching the Eternal Father to fulfil His promise, and raise to life her most Blessed Son. Whilst thus in prayer, she saw Him before her, more glorious than can be imagined, accompanied by that army of saints all clothed in robes of glory. Contemplate the sweet conversation of the Son and of the Mother on this occasion, seeing the tempest of His Passion past, and finding themselves in the tranquillity of bliss ; see what congratulations that Holy Mother received from the saints, and what grateful thanks for her share in the work of redemption, and how great was their mutual joy at meeting. Rejoice with them, and learn for thy profit how great is the advantage of those who share in the sufferings of Christ, since He so promptly rewards their merits. Ponder the recompense He granted to His blessed Body and to His most Holy Mother, hastening His hour not to delay their consolation ; and take courage to bear thy cross in His company, that thou mayst merit to be crowned with Him in glory.

SECOND MEDITATION.

For Easter Monday.

HOW CHRIST APPEARED TO THE DISCIPLES ON THE ROAD
TO EMMAUS—(LUKE XXIV.)

First Point.—See with the eyes of thy soul the two disciples on their road to Emmaus, sad on account of the death of the Lord, disconsolate because unconscious of His Resurrection, and conversing by the way on His life and Passion. And behold Christ Himself, in the dress of a pilgrim, who follows and joins them, seeking, like the Good Shepherd, the sheep that had strayed from the fold. Ponder how often, without thy knowledge, God goes after thee, seeks thee, assists thee, converses with thee, consoles thee, and counts thy steps to give thee for them a very great reward. Learn of Him to show mercy to thy brethren, consoling them in their sorrows and afflictions; study His vigilance to exercise it towards those committed to thy care, sparing neither labour nor watchfulness in what concerns their welfare. Rejoice to have so good and loving a Lord, who on the day of His great triumph forgot not His own, but took a new disguise to console and gladden them, and give them the news of His resurrection; and beg of Him not to leave thee alone and disconsolate, although thy lukewarmness deserve it, but to give thee some share of the joy He dispenses to all.

Second Point.—Consider the reasons, on the part of these two disciples, why Christ came and visited them, announcing to them His Resurrection. First, was the sorrow they felt for the Passion and death of the Saviour, for whosoever compassionates Him deserves to be consoled, and to have a share in the glory of His Resurrection. Secondly, they were conversing on the life and Passion, miracles, and preaching of Christ; and holy conversation on the life and Passion of our Lord is an

allurement that draws Him into our company. Learn from the one and the other for thy profit to meditate continually on the life and Passion of the Saviour, and to eliminate from thy discourse all worldly matters, treating of spiritual and holy things, that thou mayst deserve His visit and consolation.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ, although aware of what the disciples were saying, yet asks to be told, discovering their wounds like a skilful surgeon, in order to cure them. Oh, how often dost thou remain sick for want of showing thy wounds to thy confessor, who holds the place of God! Hear how Christ reprehends His disciples, calling them ignorant and of little faith, since they were so ready to doubt His Resurrection; and placing thy hand on thy heart, own how much more thou dost merit the reproach than they; observe next the humility with which they listen to Him, without knowing Him, or recognising who He was, and learn to bear silently and humbly the correction of thy superiors and spiritual Fathers. Hear also the disciples say that their hearts burnt within them at His words. Oh, that God would speak to thy heart and inflame it with His love! Speak to God if thou wouldst have God speak to thee and inflame thee with His ardent charity.

Fourth Point.—Contemplate what took place when they drew near to the town; how our Lord made as though He would leave them, whilst in reality He was yearning to remain. Oh, how much does this Lord love us! Whenever He seems to hide or withdraw Himself from us, it is but a feint or a threat. Oh, depart not from God, and God will not leave thee. He made as though He would pass on, to try the affection of His well-beloved disciples, that they might pray and detain Him; thus does He hide Himself, and feign to go away and leave thee, that thou mayst pray and entreat Him not to depart. Call Him, seek Him, cry out to Him, tell Him to remain, and not to abandon thee; for He is more anxious to assist thee than thou canst be to retain Him with

thee: He seeks but to try thy love. Lastly, be present at table with the disciples; see how Christ gives way at the first word, sits down with them, takes bread in His hands, and having done this, divides and distributes it as He had done at the Last Supper, by this action discovering Himself to them; they recognise and adore Him, and He disappears from their presence, leaving them bathed in an ocean of delight. O Lord, that Thou wouldst deign to visit us! Oh, that Thou wouldst come and seek this lost sheep, and feed it with a few of the crumbs that fall from Thy table. Regard not my unworthiness but Thine infinite goodness; grant me to believe in Thee, to love Thee, and ever to preach Thee; grant me a most firm confidence in Thy promises, and one ray of Thy light that I may know Thee and seek Thee, despising all that the world adores for Thy love.

THIRD MEDITATION.

For Tuesday in Easter Week.

HOW CHRIST APPEARED TO THE ASSEMBLED APOSTLES
(LUKE XXIV.)

First Point.—Consider how all the apostles and disciples of Christ, being gathered together on the day of His Resurrection, Christ glorified appeared to them, and consoled them with those sweet words, "Peace be to you; it is I, fear not:" for where God is there is always peace, and peace engenders security and casts out fear. Ponder the care of Christ to collect His sheep, to visit and console them; beg of Him not to forget thee, but to visit and assist thee, and to give thee peace, rest, and tranquillity of heart, casting out all anxiety and fear; for if thou hast God with thee there is no cause for fear, even though the whole world arm itself against thee.

Second Point.—Consider how the disciples, being unable, for the greatness of their joy, to convince themselves that it was the Lord, He showed them His wounds, saying, “See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; handle Me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see Me to have.” Ponder how on that very day He had not allowed Himself to be touched by St. Mary Magdalen, and now He commands His apostles to handle Him; because St. Mary Magdalen did not need that proof for her faith, for she believed most firmly that He was risen: the disciples did need it, and so He gave Himself to be handled. Whence thou wilt perceive that oftentimes weak women exceed in faith and devotion learned men. Observe also the benignity of the Saviour, who with so great humility gave Himself to be touched and handled, that He might dissipate their incredulity. See with what devotion all that holy company would approach to touch the wounds of Christ, and what joy must have been in their hearts. Approach thou also with greatest reverence to adore and venerate them as the instruments of thy redemption and the secure port of thy salvation.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ, yet further to confirm their faith, asked them to give Him something to eat, and they offered him a piece of fish and some honey, which He eat before them, to convince them that He was not a spirit, as they imagined, but a real man. Oh, great love and delicate tenderness of the Saviour, who being glorified, and thus in a state foreign to eating and drinking, went out of His way, and humbled Himself by performing these actions common to the wayfarer, and suitable to so inferior a state, in order to win the souls of men, to save them from infidelity, and establish them in the belief of His Resurrection. Give Him many thanks for all this, and see what thou shouldst do for the good of thy soul and of those under thy charge, and when it is advisable, hesitate not to humble thyself to the performance of lowly acts, abating something of thy dignity in imitation of Christ our Lord. See how He eats

of what His disciples give Him, and how He gives thee to eat of His own Flesh at the table of the altar. Consider what thanks thou owest Him, and with what devotion thou shouldst serve Him in return for so singular a mercy.

Fourth Point.—Consider the words with which He terminated His visit, telling them that so it behoved that Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead, to enter into His glory ; and commanding them to preach to the whole world penance and the remission of sins. Ponder for thy profit that if Christ had to enter into His glory by the way of the Cross and of an infamous death, how much more fitting is it for thee thus to enter the glory which is not thine. Note also that He commands the preaching of penance and of the remission of sins, because they depend on each other, and the one is not found without the other. If thou wouldst obtain pardon of thy sins, it is necessary to do penance for them ; resolve so to do, and beg of God His grace for the fulfilment of thy purpose.

FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday in Easter Week.

HOW CHRIST APPEARED TO THE APOSTLES WHILST FISHING
IN THE SEA OF TIBERIAS—(JOHN XXI.)

First Point.—Consider how, as the Holy Evangelist St. John tells us, St. Peter invited the other disciples to go fishing, and not having caught anything all night, Christ appeared on the shore and ordered them to cast the net on the right hand, and they then took a great draught. Wherein ponder how it becomes the disciples of Christ to solicit others to the performance of good works in His service after the example of St. Peter, and learn hence always to draw thy neighbour to works of piety and

devotion, and to persuade him to the performance of them. Consider next the mercy of the Saviour, and how great was that He manifested towards His disciples, appearing to them during their labour, and when discouraged at having caught nothing, and draw thence great confidence in God, that He will be favourable to thee and visit thee in thy labours, and in the works that thou undertakest for His holy service. Beg of Him not to forget thee, but to visit and strengthen thee as He visited and strengthened His disciples.

Second Point.—Consider the reasons why the disciples caught nothing until Christ our Redeemer came to them. First, because they cast their net at night, which signifies sin; and those that work whilst in a state of sin, however hard they labour, gain nothing for eternal life. Secondly, because at first they fished of their own will, and afterwards in obedience to Christ's command, which assures success to those who are governed and guided by it. Thirdly, because they cast the net on the left hand, which signifies the temporal goods of this world; and Christ our Lord commanded them to cast it on the right, which symbolises eternal treasures. From which thou hast to learn to labour always in the light of grace, and not in the darkness of sin, to be guided by the will of God, seeking always His honour, glory, and service, in whatever works thou dost perform, and always to cast thy net to the right, seeking heavenly things if thou wouldst obtain great profit. Grieve for all the labour thou hast spent in the course of thy life in laying up perishable riches, and in seeking the dignities and vain honours of this world, all of which are empty nothingness; and taking the advice of Christ, cast thy net to the right for time and heavenly riches, and thy labour will be as completely successful as was that of the disciples.

Third Point.—Consider how the Holy Evangelist says, that whilst the disciples were fishing at His command, Christ was on the shore, in their sight, without their knowing Him, preparing food for them when they

should come. For He is ever in sight of those who labour for His service, without their seeing or knowing Him, and He prepares their food, providing for their needs. Draw from this great courage to employ thyself in His service, with steadfast confidence in the care His providence ever has of His servants and of thee, supplying thy wants. Cast all thy care with the utmost confidence into His hands, and be assured that He sees and assists thee in thy works and labours, as He did the disciples, though thou seest Him not with thy bodily eyes.

Fourth Point.—Consider how, as soon as the disciples had taken so great a draught of fishes, they recognised that it was by the virtue of Christ; and learn to acknowledge that the success of thy labours is the work of His hands, and to give Him thanks for it, attributing the glory of them to Him from whose hand thou receivest it. See how the disciples then came to shore, with what joy Christ would receive them, and theirs at beholding Him risen; the benignity with which He would sit down with them, divide the bread and fish that He had prepared on the hot coals, and give it to them to eat. O sweet Jesus! blessed be Thou a thousand times for dealing thus with Thy servants! Who would not serve Thee always, Who art so tender and loving? Approach the Lord, my soul, with the disciples, leave the restless sea of this world in which thou art engulfed, abandon the nets which hold thee prisoner, and casting aside all worldly occupations, entreat Him to permit thee to draw near to His table, beg of Him to give thee a few of the crumbs that fall from it, and take thy place amongst His people, to remain for ever in His service.

*FIFTH MEDITATION.**For Thursday in Easter Week.*

HOW CHRIST APPEARED TO ST. MARY MAGDALEN
(JOHN XX.)

First Point.—Consider how St. Peter, St. John, and St. Mary Magdalen came to the sepulchre to seek Christ, and how the disciples went away because they found not the body of the Lord ; but St. Mary Magdalen remained at the door weeping His absence, and merited to see, alive and glorious, Him whom she sought as dead. Learn hence that it is not sufficient to seek Christ in order to find Him, unless, like St. Mary Magdalen, we seek with perseverance, and that those deserve to enjoy the glory of His resurrection who, with lively faith and devotion, seek, follow, and contemplate His Passion and death, like this holy penitent seated by the tomb.

Second Point.—Consider the intense love of this holy penitent, the tears that she shed because she found not, alive or dead, the Beloved of her soul ; and how, beholding the angels clothed in white, neither the sight of them nor their words sufficed to calm her grief, though both were so consoling ; for to them that truly love naught can give comfort but the finding of God. Enter into account with thyself, and see how great a distance there is between thee and this holy woman in the love of the Lord, and how little thou dost love Him since thou seekest Him so tepidly, findest consolation in earthly goods, and art content without thy God. Weep and bewail, with this holy penitent, the absence of thy sweet Spouse, and know neither joy nor rest until, like her, thou find Him to rejoice with Him.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ, attracted by the allurements of her sighs and fervent tears, appeared to her in the dress and appearance of a gardener, and spoke to

her words of consolation, saying, "Woman, why weepest thou?" Well did the Lord know for whom she wept, and whom she sought, but He asks her to hear it from her own mouth, and to purify her love yet further. Oh, how often does Christ conceal Himself, and does not at once make Himself known, although He is with us, in order to try our love, and to make us burn with it the more, that we may multiply our prayers, our sighs, and petitions, and that we may seek Him with greater fervour! Learn hence what love thou shouldst manifest in seeking and serving Him, what perseverance in that service, and what lively faith in His presence with thee, even though, like Mary, thou fail to recognise Him.

Fourth Point. — Consider how St. Mary Magdalen answered that she sought the dead Christ, and forthwith she found Him alive, and Christ risen and glorious discovered Himself to her by one only word that He spoke: "Mary." Oh, how easy is it for God in one instant to console the poor, and to change wailing into mirth and sorrow into joy. Blessed is the man that trusteth in Him. Contemplate the delight of this saint at seeing the Beloved of her soul, whom she was weeping as dead, more glorious and more resplendent than the sun; with what ardour she cast herself at His Feet, where she had found the remedy of her sins, and how Christ restrained her from touching Him, because, as we said before, her faith did not, as that of others, need such confirmation in order to believe that He had risen. Draw from all this great profit for thy soul, confiding in the Lord that He will comfort thee in thy distress, and that, as with St. Mary Magdalen, so will He double thy joy, fulfilling thy desires more perfectly than thou canst conceive.

*SIXTH MEDITATION.**For the Friday in Easter Week.***HOW CHRIST APPEARED TO THE APOSTLES IN GALILEE
(MATT. XXVIII.)**

First Point.—Consider how Christ commanded His disciples to go to a mountain of Galilee, that He might there manifest Himself glorified, and give them the last directions and teachings of His Gospel; and they being there assembled, He fulfilled His promise, showing Himself to all in His risen state. Contemplate the very great joy the disciples must have felt at beholding their Holy Master so glorious, and with what delight they would participate in His blessedness. Learn hence for thy advancement, first, to rejoice with the apostles in the glory of our Redeemer, and next, to withdraw thyself into a solitude and ascend the mountain of perfection, in order to merit to enjoy the glory of the resurrection of the Lord. For although He might have granted them this favour in the city, Christ led His disciples into solitude and to the mountain height, to teach them to leave the commerce of towns, and to retire to solitude, in order to enjoy the mysterious secrets of the Lord.

Second Point.—Listen to and meditate the words that the Saviour said to them: "All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth. Going, therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them," &c. Consider that as Christ humbled Himself more than any other person in heaven or on earth, so was He exalted above all, and to Him was given universal power over all, that thou mayst learn to humble thyself, and to perceive that the more thou abasest thyself, the greater honour thou wilt receive from God. Notice also in what Christ employs His power, not in exalting Himself nor in humbling others, but in honouring and exalting all, communicating His

power to His disciples that they may forgive the sins of men, and may baptize them, and teach and direct them in the way to heaven. Draw from this great desire to employ the power and authority that God may give thee in doing good to thy neighbour, and in honouring and assisting him, as Christ employed His in the service of His brethren.

Third Point.—Consider how He commanded them not only to baptize, but also to teach and exhort all to observe all things whatsoever He had commanded; because faith alone suffices not, but it must be accompanied by good works. Take account of thy actions, and see how thou fulfillest this precept; see whether thou dost observe and accomplish all that Christ has commanded thee; weep over the faults thou hast committed against His commandments, and beg of the Lord grace to keep them with entire fidelity.

Fourth Point.—Consider the words with which the Redeemer winds up His exhortation, saying, “And behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.” Oh, most consoling words! Consider of what great comfort this promise must have been to the hearts of the disciples, hearing that their Master would remain with them, and never for a single day cease to assist them with His grace, His power, and His aid, counselling, fortifying, and defending them. To thee also does He speak in these words; observe then that He assists thee, and is ever with thee in all thy actions; perform them, therefore, as though He were visibly present, and take courage in thy tribulations, since thou hast by thy side so tender and so omnipotent a Lord. Learn to place great trust in His power, and to strive manfully, confiding in His assistance, and beg help from Him not to faint in any contradiction or temptation that may assail thee.

*SEVENTH MEDITATION.**For the Saturday in Easter Week.*

HOW CHRIST APPEARED TO ST. PETER—(JOHN XX. ;
MATT. XVI. ; LUKE XXIV.)

First Point.—Consider how St. Mary Magdalen and the other holy women, returning from the sepulchre, gave account to the apostles of what they had seen, and that Christ was risen ; and how they were not believed, and the vision of the angels and the other signs they mentioned were treated as delusions ; and how they suffered this discredit for bearing testimony to the truth of the mysteries of Christ. From this thou shouldst learn, first, to imitate the fervour and charity of these holy women in sharing with thy neighbour whatever knowledge thou mayst possess of the divine mysteries, and of spiritual things whenever it may tend to the service of God, as they gave the apostles the news of the Resurrection of Christ, even though in consequence thou hast to suffer in the beginning some discredit, trusting that God will defend thy cause. Secondly, not to treat spiritual persons with incredulity, as did the apostles ; for God oftentimes chooses weak instruments for great things, thus to show forth His power ; and He prefers those of higher virtue, even when less gifted, to those of greater parts, in order to humble the latter and exalt the former. Humble thyself before God, and submit to His judgment, acknowledging thyself to be the least of all, and the most unworthy of His favours.

Second Point.—Consider how, on hearing the news of the Resurrection, St. Peter and St. John, as the most fervent in the love of Christ and the least incredulous of His mysteries, ran to the sepulchre to assure themselves of the fact, the others remaining shut up in the Cenacle for fear of the Jews. Oh, had we but a spark

of tender love for Christ, how many obstacles should we overcome, how we should despise the fears that make us cowards in His service, and how we should run with fervent eagerness in the company of these apostles to serve, acknowledge, and bless Him. Take courage from their example, and beg of the Lord to give thee a spark of this holy fire, that thou mayst despise all human fears, and run with fervour in the path of virtue, seeking His honour and glory, and better service.

Third Point.—Consider how the two arrived at the sepulchre, and how St. John waited to allow St. Peter to enter, giving him the first place as to his superior, and entered following him ; and they found not the Body of the Saviour, but only the winding-sheet and the linen in which Christ had been wrapt ; and the angels appeared not to them as to the women, nor did they receive at that time any further proof of the Resurrection, the Lord relying on their greater virtue and constancy to cause them to believe what had been more clearly demonstrated to the women. From which thou shouldst learn, first, the respect and courtesy that thou shouldst always show towards thy superiors and prelates, giving them the first place, as St. John did to St. Peter ; and secondly, not to expect revelations or miracles in the service of God, and in confirmation of His holy mysteries, but to believe them through the means that He has provided in His Church, for then will thy faith be the firmer and more meritorious when the proofs are fewer and the evidence less.

Fourth Point.—Consider how, as St. Luke says, St. Peter withdrew in admiration to think over what he had seen, and how being thus in meditation, praising God, rejoicing at the glory of His Master, and renewing, as it is piously believed, his grief and tears at having denied Him, the risen Lord appeared to him, consoled him, strengthened him in his holy faith, that he might confirm his brethren, and bathing his spirit in ineffable delight, granted him pardon of his sins, and left him

infinitely consoled. In which thou shouldst ponder how Christ appeared in the first place (after His Holy Mother) to St. Mary Magdalen, and to St. Peter, when meditating on His mysteries and weeping for His absence, both having sinned and done bitter penance for their faults. From which thou shouldst learn to meditate slowly and attentively the mysteries of Christ, and also to have great confidence that thou wilt obtain from the Divine Mercy pardon of thy sins if thou dost condign penance for them, and with that pardon many graces and favours, from the hand of God.

EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For Low Sunday.

HOW CHRIST APPEARED TO HIS DISCIPLES IN THE CENACLE. (JOHN XX.)

First Point.—Consider how to Christ no door is shut, and how where evil could not find admittance good entered. For the disciples being assembled in the Cenacle, the doors well closed for fear of the Jews, Christ arisen and glorious entered, and placed Himself in their midst, like the sun in the centre of the heavens, illuminating and gladdening their hearts with the light of His Resurrection and the sweetness of His words. Consider the benignity of the Saviour, the love He bears His chosen ones, the care He takes to console them in their sorrows, and how for this purpose He multiplies miracles, making use of the subtilty that He enjoyed in His glorious Body to enter through closed doors. Rejoice to have such a Lord and Master, and place great confidence in His love and providence ; beg of Him to visit thee in thine afflictions and troubles, and to console and strengthen thee as He did His apostles and disciples.

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Second Point.—Ponder how in this visit Christ placed Himself in the centre of that congregation ; for He desires to be in the midst of His chosen ones, and in the centre of thy heart, making it His abode and resting-place. Empty it then of all earthly things, and offer it entirely to Him, that He may come unto thee, visit thee, console thee, and abide with thee. Ponder the extreme delight of all that holy company at beholding the glory of their Master and Redeemer ; how all would approach to adore, reverence, and serve Him ; with what love and caresses He would receive them, and reassure them against the fear they were in of the Jews who persecuted them. Approach thou also, adore and reverence thy Lord ; beg of Him to bless thee, to give thee a share in the joy of His Resurrection, and to strengthen and encourage thee in His holy service.

Third Point.—Consider how He showed them the sacred wounds of His Hands, Feet, and Side, which in His glorified Body must have shone more brightly than the stars of heaven, thus increasing His beauty. See how He prides Himself on having suffered for thee, that thou mayst place thy pride in suffering for Him ; and behold how the affronts and wounds suffered in this world for the glory of God and the good of souls are in the next turned into diamonds and precious stones of glory, honour, and beauty. O Lord ! would that I might suffer affronts, stripes, wounds, insults, and death for Thee as Thou didst endure them for me ! Beg of the Lord this favour, and encourage thyself by His example to suffer with joy for His love whatever may befall thee.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the Evangelist St. John says that He then breathed on them, and gave them the Holy Ghost for the remission of sins, not contenting Himself with the great happiness He gave them in making them participators of the glory of His Resurrection, but giving them at the same time the fulness of the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of sins. Especially

for this did Christ come into the world, for this He sent His disciples, not to punish but to forgive sins, and for this did He communicate to them the Holy Ghost. Oh, that He would come into our souls, and give us this gift of gifts of His Holy Spirit! Beg of Him to come into thine, and to do thee this favour, pardoning thee thy sins with the liberality with which He pardoned the apostles, giving them the very breath of His mouth. O Lord, that Thou wouldst give me strength with Thy breath, the pardon of my sins, and grace to abide in Thy favour; this I beg, this I entreat; hold me in Thy hand that I may never offend Thee more.

NINTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday in Low Week.

HOW CHRIST APPEARED TO THE APOSTLES WITH
ST. THOMAS. (JOHN XX.)

First Point.—Consider how, as the Evangelist St. John says, when Christ visited His apostles in the Cenacle, St. Thomas was not with them, and for that reason did not enjoy the glory of His Resurrection, and how Christ, although He might have appeared to him separately, would not do so, thus showing us how we often fail to participate in His consolations and mercies because we frequent not the society of those to whom He communicates them. From which thou shouldst draw a disposition and firm resolution to avoid as much as thou canst all singularity, and to follow the ordinary way with others in exercises of religion, and in those things belonging to the service of God, that He may not deprive thee of the graces that He communicates to others.

Second Point.—Consider the incredulity that came over the soul of St. Thomas, which could not be over-

come by the most Holy Virgin, nor by the apostles, nor by all the disciples, who, as eye-witnesses, testified that they had seen Christ risen and glorious; God so permitting it for the greater certainty of our faith in His Resurrection, and for the good of our souls. From which thou shouldst derive, on the one hand, great fear, caused by the knowledge of thy weakness, of falling into a like sin; for if so holy an apostle fell, how much more easily mightst thou fall into greater sins; and, on the other hand, submission of thy judgment to that of God, who permits such falls to prevent greater evils, and to draw from them great good, as happened with St. Thomas.

Third Point.—Consider how that holy congregation, afflicted by the incredulity of St. Thomas, would have recourse to prayer, and would supplicate the Lord most tenderly in his behalf, and at their prayer Christ came and placed Himself in their midst, and spoke to St. Thomas, calling him and showing him His wounds, that he might see and touch them, and by that experience be undeceived and drawn out of his ignorance and error. O most benign Jesus! O careful Shepherd! how evident is the love Thou bearest us, since for one single sheep Thou dost reopen Thy wounds, therein to shelter it and to heal it with the myrrh and sweetest balsam of Thy most precious Blood! Pause awhile on this thought, and ponder for the profit of thy soul how important it is to associate with the good, and of what value are their prayers, since those of the apostles of the Lord were of such service to St. Thomas, and how God repaid them for their charity towards him by revisiting them and sharing with them His glory; for although He might have appeared to St. Thomas alone, as He did to St. Peter and to Magdalen, He would not do so save in the company of all, to give them a second time participation in the glory of His Resurrection. Derive hence a lively desire to care for thy flock, who are those committed to thee by God, labouring for each one with the same

earnestness as for all, according to the example of Christ, and a firm confidence in His pity, seeing how great was that He exhibited towards St. Thomas. Beg of Him to seek thee and to place thee within His wounds, where thou wilt be safe and sheltered from all thine enemies.

Fourth Point.—Consider attentively what further befell St. Thomas ; see with what confusion he must have stood before all the apostles in the presence of the Redeemer ; how he must have cast himself with shame at His feet, weeping for his incredulity, and entreating forgiveness. Ponder how the Blessed Virgin and all that holy company must have prayed for him, with what benignity and love the Saviour would then raise him up, telling him to put his finger into the wounds of His Hands, Feet, and Side, for that He was willing to die again for his sake alone. Hear how St. Thomas confesses Him for his Lord and his God ; and ruminate that sentence with which Christ wound up this visit and took His leave, saying, “ Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed : blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed ; ” whence thou shouldst learn the merit of faith, not only in the Resurrection, but in all the mysteries of the life and death of the Redeemer. Give Him thanks for having given thee light to know and to confess Him, and beg His grace to persevere in His faith, and to draw all to His knowledge and service, longing that all who are or ever shall be born into the world may know, praise, confess, and believe in Him.

TENTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday in Low Week.

HOW CHRIST APPEARED TO THE HOLY WOMEN RETURNING
FROM THE SEPULCHRE—(MARK XVI.)

First Point.—Consider how fervent was the prayer of the holy women who accompanied Christ and served Him

during the whole of His public life ; and at the time of His Passion followed Him to Calvary, when, with the exception of St. John, who stood at the foot of the Cross, all His disciples abandoned Him. Consider how they bore the Blessed Virgin company in her solitude the whole of that Sabbath, and on the following day employed their small means in the purchase of precious ointments wherewith to anoint the Body of the Saviour ; and notwithstanding the fear they might have of the guards who kept the sepulchre, they set out very early in the morning, with courage and confidence, to anoint the Body of their Lord. Contemplate the constancy of these holy women, and what high virtues they exhibited in all these actions, what faith and confidence, what tender love and charity towards God, what fortitude and perseverance, serving Him in life and in death ; what fervour and diligence in seeking Him, and what generosity in the employment of their own property to minister to His wants. Learn from the great lesson they teach how to serve thy Redeemer, and beg of Him grace to imitate them in all things.

Second Point.—Consider how they came to the sepulchre, and how God removed all the obstacles that lay in their path ; for He opened the door by the ministry of angels, and terrified the guards so that they found them as dead, and in their place angels who received them with joy, and consoled them with the glad tidings of the Resurrection of the Lord. Draw from all this a feeling of great confidence in the providence of God, that He will remove for thee all the difficulties that may arise in His service, and take courage even though thou be weaker than these women, for thou wilt find the Lord favourable to thee, and His angels will console thee as they did them.

Third Point.—Consider how the Evangelist says that angels, dressed in white robes and seated on the stone of the sepulchre, told the holy women to enter and see the place where the Lord had been laid, and that they did enter and see, assuring themselves thus of His Resurrec-

tion. The sepulchre, as St. Austin says, was a type of Paradise, before the coming of Christ shut and guarded by angels with fire and sword. Ponder how, by the virtue of Christ crucified, that closed door was unlocked, the Paradise of bliss was thrown open to men, and the angels who impeded their entrance now invite and lead them in, and communicate to them its glory as they did to these holy women. Take courage by this example ; be ashamed that weak women should have the advantage of thee in the service of the Lord, and resolve seriously to seek Him with diligence if thou wouldst merit the glory of the Resurrection.

Fourth Point.—Consider how, as these holy women were returning to the Cenacle, to give account to the apostles of what they had seen, Christ appeared to them on the road and consoled them, communicating to them the glory of His Resurrection, repaying thus their fervour and diligence and the love they bore Him. Contemplate the joy of their souls at seeing alive and glorious Him Whom they had sought as dead, and draw thence great desire to serve such a Lord, who thus rewards with super-abundant favours the services rendered Him. Give Him thanks for all, and beg His assistance to love and serve Him, like these holy women, with all the strength of thy soul.

ELEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday in Low Week.

ON OTHER APPARITIONS OF CHRIST TO HIS
DISCIPLES.

First Point.—Consider what St. Luke says in the Acts of the Apostles, that Christ having suffered, appeared to His apostles during the space of forty days, by which is meant that He did not appear to them once

and again, but many times, consoling, encouraging, and confirming them in the faith of His Resurrection, as a good and solicitous Shepherd, caring for His sheep with the same vigilance after as before His death. Contemplate the love that Christ bears His chosen ones, and the solicitude with which He seeks their good, and the increase of His fold, and that He does the same now from heaven as He did when on earth, seeking the advancement of all, and thine in particular. Give Him thanks for all this, and learn from thy Saviour's example to be solicitous for thy neighbour's welfare, and especially for the good of those whom God has committed to thy care.

Second Point.—Consider how St. Luke says that during all these forty days that He spent on earth, seeking the increase of His Church, and appearing many times to the disciples, Christ ceased not to prove to them by many arguments the glory of His Resurrection, and how it behoved that He should suffer and die, and afterwards rise again to enter into His glory. He thus gave reason and foundation to our hope in the general resurrection; for, as St. Paul says, if Christ rose not from the dead, vain is our hope of rising again with Him, but if He rose again, as He certainly did, then is our confidence to rise again with Him well founded. Contemplate the glory with which Christ arose to die no more, and meditate that which awaits thee if thou lead a holy life, when thou shalt also arise gloriously to an immortal and eternal life. Strengthen thyself with this hope to follow the footsteps of Christ in this world, in order to obtain the glory of His Resurrection in the next.

Third Point.—Consider how St. Luke adds, that whenever He appeared to His disciples, Christ always spoke to them of the kingdom of God, not of secular and earthly things, but of celestial and divine ones, and especially of the riches and delights of the kingdom of God, encouraging them with this hope for the strife that

awaited them in the propagation of the Gospel, and to endure the labours, persecutions, and martyrdoms that they would have to suffer in order to obtain the crown of so magnificent and glorious a kingdom, and to attain that exceeding greatness which no tongue can adequately describe. Oh, that thou wouldst listen to and meditate on the words that Christ spoke to His beloved disciples concerning the kingdom of God ; how thou wouldst covet its possession, and with what eagerness thou wouldst suffer any tribulation to obtain it ! Contemplate in detail the grandeur, beauty, riches, and delights of the kingdom of the Lord, the peace and security, the glory and tranquillity enjoyed by its inhabitants, and the eternity of its duration in the sight and presence of God, seeing Him face to face as He is in Himself. Lift thy desires from this vile earth to that celestial kingdom, endeavouring to merit and obtain it at the cost of any labour soever, and being persuaded that whatever price thou payest it is still purchased for nothing.

Fourth Point.—Consider how, during this period of forty days, Christ appeared to His disciples in various ways and places, on some occasions manifestly, on others in such manner that they knew Him not, although He conversed with them ; yet they always felt the effect of His words in their hearts. From which thou shouldst learn how He now oftentimes visits and speaks to His chosen ones in various places, without limiting Himself to this one or to that, and without making Himself clearly known, because so it becomes His government and our good. Take account of thyself, and consider how many times the Lord visits thee in this manner, and speaks to thy heart, and how important it is to thee to hearken to His words, and esteem them, and put them in practice. Beg of Him not to forget thee, to give thee His grace to hear and obey Him, and to inflame thy heart with the fire of His charity, as He did the hearts of His disciples to love and serve Him eternally.

TWELFTH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday in Ecw Week.

HOW CHRIST GAVE TO ST. PETER THE KEYS OF HIS CHURCH
BEFORE ASCENDING TO HEAVEN—(JOHN XXI.)

First Point.—Consider how St. John narrates, that whilst the disciples were at sea fishing with great labour, Christ appeared to them on the shore, spoke and called to them, gave them a great draught of fishes, and seated Himself with great affability in their midst, giving them to eat, and dividing amongst them the bread and fish with tokens of great love. Contemplate the benignity of the Lord on this occasion, and the caresses which He bestows on His chosen ones even after His Resurrection, and rejoice to have so loving and benign a Father and Lord. What endearments He bestows on thee each day at the table of His altar, giving thee His own Body and Blood as food, with infinite love and desire for thy good. Give Him thanks for this, and implore assistance to imitate Him in thy conduct towards thy neighbours, treating them with kindness and humility.

Second Point.—Consider how, the meal being ended, Christ asked St. Peter three times whether he loved Him, and that not in an ordinary degree, but more than the rest, and St. Peter answered that Christ knew that he loved Him, and that he relied on that knowledge. The Saviour then recommended to him His flock, saying, "Feed My sheep, feed My lambs." From which thou shouldst learn what love he should bear towards God who is to feed His flock, that he may seek its increase, and not his own advantage, for this were to love himself and not Christ, for Whose sake he should feed the sheep, without having any other end or interest than His service. Imagine to thyself Christ asking thee, as He did St. Peter, whether thou lovest Him, and see what thou

shouldst answer the Lord, Who knows and penetrates the secrets of thy heart ; see whether thou love thyself, seeking only thine own interest ; how then can the Lord trust His flock to thee, who, instead of a pastor, art a wolf to devour it ? Bewail thy coldness, and the little love thou hast for God, and entreat Him to give thee some particle of the burning love He gave St. Peter, that thou mayst employ thyself in His service, and in doing good to thy neighbour.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ asked St. Peter three times whether he loved Him, in satisfaction for the three denials he made on the night of the Passion. From which thou shouldst draw that the satisfaction must be proportionate to the offence, and that where the sins are numerous the satisfaction must also be great. Place thy hand on thy heart and consider the offences thou hast committed in the course of thy life, and how little satisfaction thou hast made for them ; for this reason God grants not to thee the favours He bestowed on St. Peter when he made satisfaction for his sins. Resolve, in His presence, to perform due penance for thy sins, and beg His grace to satisfy for them as thou shouldst.

Fourth Point.—Consider how on St. Peter's saying that he loved Him, Christ committed to him the charge of His Church, making him supreme shepherd of His flock. Well did the Lord know whether St. Peter loved Him or not ; but He chose to question him, that he might confess it with his own mouth, and to give him to understand that he was to show the love he bore Him by feeding His sheep, and by looking after and seeking the good of His brethren, whom He calls His sheep, on account of the love He bears them all. Whence thou canst learn the love that superiors should have for their subordinates, considering them as a flock beloved of God, to Whom they must testify their love by the care they take in feeding His sheep. Consider how God is on the watch to see what love thou hast for Him, by

that which thou dost exhibit towards thy neighbours, and that He commends them to thee, that thou mayst cherish them, especially those who are poor and lowly, for these, as more necessitous, are His lambs.

THIRTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday in Low Week.

HOW CHRIST BORE HIS WOUNDS ON HIS RISEN BODY.

First Point.—To-day being Friday, contemplate the marks of the Passion on the risen Body of Christ our Lord, each one more resplendent than the sun; see what glory the Eternal Father has bestowed on Him because of all He suffered for men. Consider that whereas He might have risen without those marks, as He did without those of the stripes and of the thorns, and those made on His Divine Face by the buffets He received, He willed that the wounds made by the nails and the spear should remain, because they were the marks of His Cross by which He consummated our redemption. Whence thou shouldst derive great courage and consolation in thy troubles and labours, remembering that they are tokens of glory and means to attain it, and that in a few days they will be changed into the eternal repose that thou wilt enjoy in bliss.

Second Point.—Consider the reasons why Christ preserved the wounds of His Passion on His sacred Body after the Resurrection, of which one was to keep alive and fresh in us the memory of His Passion, and to give us to understand that, as the Apostle St. John tells us in the Apocalypse, that in heaven the angels and blessed sing canticles of the Passion, so here on earth His chosen ones should also sing them, bearing it ever in mind,

meditating it, contemplating it, and conversing thereon ; for there is nothing more agreeable to the Lord. Beg of God His grace to meditate His Passion as thou shouldst, and with all the tenderness and gratitude to which so great a mercy obliges thee.

Third Point.—Consider another reason given by St. Bernard, which is that He might intercede for men before the Eternal Father, showing His open wounds, and begging, through them, pardon for sin and fresh graces and mercies. O Lord, what thanks can I render Thee for the love Thou bearest me, since not once, but many times, Thou hast opened for me the wounds of Thy sacred Body ! O my soul ! see what an Advocate thou hast in the presence of God, and what a plea, signed with His Blood, He presents at His tribunal for thee ! Pray with Him ; offer those most precious wounds in satisfaction for thy sins, and beg of the Eternal Father through them to grant thee fresh favours ; for their value is infinite, and therefore greater than anything thou canst ask for or obtain. Beg for thyself and for the whole Church abundance of celestial goods ; let the wounds of Christ supply with their value what is wanting to thy works.

Fourth Point.—Consider how St. Paul says that he bore stamped on his body the wounds of Christ, because by mortification and penance he made himself His image, also because he glorified in them rejoicing more in ignominies for Christ's sake than in the honours of the world, and also because of the grateful memory he always carried with him of so signal a benefit. Whence let us draw so to study the image of our Redeemer as to transform our bodies into living images of Him by mortification and penance, to glory in His ignominies, as He gloried in suffering them for us, and to take courage to suffer crucifixion and death, if need be, for His service.

FOURTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday in Low Week.

ON THE ANTIPHON SUNG BY THE CHURCH AT THIS SEASON.

“Joy to thee, O Queen of Heaven ! Alleluia !
 He whom thou wast meet to bear, Alleluia !
 As He promised, hath arisen ; Alleluia !
 Pour for us to Him thy prayer. Alleluia !”

First Point.—Consider how the Church at this season of the Resurrection of Christ calls the Blessed Virgin Queen of Heaven ; for although this title always belongs to her, yet at this season did she both exhibit and experience more particularly its appositeness, her soul being transformed into a paradise of glory and bliss with the joy of the Resurrection of her most Holy Son. Contemplate the delight she experienced, which was greater than that enjoyed by any creature ; for as she had suffered more than any one at the time of the Passion, so was her joy the greater at the time of the Resurrection. See how all the angels would approach with great jubilee to congratulate her, as would also St. Mary Magdalen and the holy women who went to the sepulchre, and all the saints who arose with Christ, and amongst them the glorious Patriarch St. Joseph, her most worthy spouse, with whom she would hold most sweet converse. Rejoice at her glory, and congratulate her on it.

Second Point.—Consider the second reason for joy that our Mother the Church gives, which is also another title of our Blessed Lady, namely, that Christ is her Son ; for to no one does this glory belong in the manner it does to the Blessed Virgin ; and as her suffering was so much the greater because it was her Son who died on the Cross, so was her glory the greater because it was her Son who rose again. And if Jacob came as it were from death to life when he heard that his son Joseph,

whom he had wept as dead, was the governor of Egypt, and his spirit was bathed in an ocean of joy, how much greater beyond comparison may we not infer was the delight of the Blessed Virgin when she not only heard but saw and enjoyed her Son alive and glorious, Whom she had seen die on the Cross. This delight was intensified on the one hand by the great love she bore Him, and on the other by the height of glory and blessedness to which she saw Him raised above all creatures. And thou, O my soul! if thou lovest thy sweet Spouse, thou shouldst for all these reasons rejoice more and more in His glorious Resurrection, in company with His most Holy Mother the Virgin Mary, our Lady.

Third Point.—Consider the third reason the Church gives for the joy and glory of our Blessed Lady on this day, namely, that Christ arose as He had *promised*, and fulfilled His word with such promptitude that the third day was scarcely commenced when He came forth from the sepulchre, glorious and triumphant over death, and visited, as we have said, His most Holy Mother, whose joy was increased by the firm hope of arising also after death with a glory similar to that of her Son. Ponder how God keeps His word, and how faithful and punctual He is in its fulfilment beyond what we could desire. Encourage thyself by His promises to confide in His bounty, and to serve Him, seeing how different He is from men, who are all so false and deceitful, and who fail us when we confide most in their good will.

Fourth Point.—Consider the last joyous title that the Church gives our Lady, which is that of Advocate and Patron, that she may pray for us to God. For the most Holy Virgin prayed at the time of the sacred Passion for the apostles and disciples of the Lord, whose weakness grieved her; and after His Resurrection she interceded for them with her Blessed Son, that He might console and strengthen them in the faith, as He did. Consider the great joy she received at seeing them brought into the fold of the Church; and with the zeal

for the salvation of the world which burnt within her breast, she was gladdened by the thought of the fruit of souls which their preaching was everywhere to produce. O most Holy Virgin! by this ineffable joy that thou receivedst on this occasion, I beseech thee to pray for us all, and especially for me, as the most needy; and to beg of thy most sweet Son to console us all, to strengthen and enliven our faith and constancy in His service, and to communicate to us a taste of the great joy that thou receivedst, so that the sweetness of its flavour may cause us to despise all earthly delights, and only to aspire after heavenly and divine bliss for ever and ever. Amen.

FIFTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Second Sunday after Easter.

ON THE GOOD SHEPHERD.—(ST. JOHN X.)

First Point.—Consider how Christ, the Son of the living God, the Only-Begotten of the Eternal Father, came down from heaven to be the Shepherd of our souls, and of thine in particular; and being able to commit this ministry to an angel or other rational creature, He would not do otherwise than fulfil it Himself, to take charge of thee, to care for thy good, and to feed thee in His own Person. Ponder who God is, and what thou art, and what thou owest to so great a Lord; give Him a thousand thanks for this benefit, and prepare thyself, as far as thou canst, to serve Him eternally.

Second Point.—Consider how the office of the Good Shepherd is to feed His sheep, and that Christ so abundantly fulfils this duty that He has given them for food His own Body and for drink His own Blood. Other shepherds nourish themselves with the flesh and blood of their lambs, but Christ feeds His with His own Flesh

and Blood. Rejoice to have such a Shepherd ; give Him infinite thanks for so incomparable a mercy, and at the same time learn to care for thy sheep, and to feed them at the cost of thy sweat, and, if necessary, of thy blood, after the example of Christ, without demanding theirs.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ says that the good and true shepherd defends his lambs from the wolf, even to the laying down his life for them, whilst the hireling, whose the sheep are not, flies and leaves them defenceless to perish at the hands of their enemies. Christ is the true Shepherd, Who gave His life for His sheep, and always protects them from the ravishing wolves ; in which signal benefit thou hast great motive for gratitude to God ; it is of less moment that thou shouldst lose thy life at the hands of thine enemies than that the Lord should deliver Himself into the hands of His, and yet so great was His love that He gave His life for thee on the Cross. O Lord, how can I show my gratitude for so signal a mercy ? Oh, that I could lay down my life for Thee, as Thou didst Thine for me ! Learn not to be a hireling, and not to serve God and thy neighbour merely for thine interest, but for the glory of God and the good of souls, for whom thou shouldst give thy life if needful, after the example of Christ, who gave His for thee.

Fourth Point.—Consider that, as Christ is the Good Shepherd, so the devil, on the contrary, is the Evil Shepherd, who tries in all things to oppose Christ. Observe how each of these pastors cares for and feeds his sheep ; behold the very great difference that there is between the Good and the Evil Shepherd, and between the sheep of the one and those of the other ; and see to which of the two folds thou wouldst belong. Consider and weigh the manner in which Christ treats His sheep, giving them even His own Blood, and carrying them on His shoulders, and see the reward which He gives them in the end. Then consider how Satan behaves to the flock of his followers, treating them as slaves, and behaving with the utmost tyranny towards them, and at last precipitating

them in an instant into the abyss of hell, where, as David says, "Death shall feed upon them."¹ Beg of the Lord to receive thee into His fold, and not to loosen His hold of thee, nor permit thee to fall into the tyranny of Satan; resolving most firmly to be one of His sheep, and offering thyself to serve Him eternally.

SIXTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE QUALITIES OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

First Point.—Consider that a good shepherd watches over his flock, and by his care and vigilance his sheep repose and feed in security. Thus thou shouldst consider the care and vigilance God has for His Church, and for thee in particular, and how He watches over thy welfare and defends thee from thine enemies during thy sleep, in order that thou mayst repose securely. Ponder how many times thy foes would have cast thee into hell, had it not been for the vigilance and care with which this Good Shepherd protects thee; and draw hence, on the one hand, a sentiment of gratitude for the care He has of thee, recognising that to Him thou owest anew each day the life thou enjoyest, and, on the other, great confidence in His protection, to live secure in the service of such a Shepherd, Who defends thee to the laying down of His life for thee. Lastly, draw from His example a lesson to watch day and night over the flock or concerns committed to thee by God, sparing thyself no effort or labour for His love.

Second Point.—The good shepherd loves his sheep, and clothes himself with their skins, that they may love him; and so God loves His elect, and clothed Himself with our flesh to converse with us, and to be loved by

¹ Psalm xlviii.

us. Contemplate the greatness of this benefit, and of this mark of His love, and draw thence a feeling of most intense love of God, and a most firm determination to wear His livery, since He, for thy sake, clothed Himself in thine. Observe the bearing of the Good Shepherd, His manner of life, dress, food, and conversation; and see how thou art to imitate and follow Him, and offer thyself heartily to His service.

Third Point.—Christ says that, like a Good Shepherd, He knows His sheep, for He has counted them, and knows who and how many they are; and thou art one of them. Meditate slowly the knowledge God has of thee, and how He has thee ever present, and sees thee, and how neither the thoughts of thy mind nor the desires of thy heart are hidden from Him; henceforth, therefore, live as one to whom God is ever present as a witness of his actions. Consider that God sees thee, and perform all thine actions with regard to Him, never losing sight of Him, and directing them all to His greater glory and service.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ says that He has other sheep that are not of this fold, whom it is necessary He should bring, that all may be one fold and one Shepherd. In which words thou hast much to meditate and to learn: First, the great mercy that God has done thee in bringing thee into the fold of His Church, not leaving thee out of it with the pagans, infidels, and heretics, who all perish miserably. See what would have become of thee had God permitted thee to perish like so great a number of souls out of His Church, and cease not to give Him thanks and to render Him service for so signal a mercy. Secondly, He says that it is needful for Him to bring them, this need being that of the sheep and the interest theirs, which He considers as His own. Recognise His immense bounty and mercy, rejoice that such should be thy Good Shepherd, and offer Him all thy strength to serve Him in the ministry of souls, and to draw those of all the world to His knowledge; grieve for the many who lose themselves,

and beg of Him to send labourers and shepherds who shall gather together His flock, convert the unfaithful, and feed His lambs, that all may be one fold and one Shepherd.

SEVENTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE OTHER QUALITIES OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

First Point.—Consider that the Good Shepherd both feeds and chastises His flock ; that He rules over it with the crook or staff, and also gives it pasture. In figure of which, as St. Gregory says, the Ark of the Testament contained the sweet manna of heaven and the rod of Moses, for in the breast of the Good Shepherd there must be the manna of gentleness, and, when needful, the rod of punishment. God, like the Good Shepherd, uses both in the treatment of His elect ; He gives them the sweetness of devotion, consolation, and prosperity, and also, when necessary, He uses the rod of rigour and chastisement to urge them on in His service. From which thou shouldst draw two things—on the one hand, a lesson how to govern thyself and those under thee, using gentleness or severity as occasion requires ; and, on the other hand, humility and resignation to the will of God, submitting to His rule, and accepting the chastisements, dryness, and toils that He may send thee with the same equanimity as consolation and prosperity when He bestows them.

Second Point.—The Good Shepherd carries with him myrrh and ointment for healing his lambs ; and so Christ supplied His Church with the Holy Sacraments, as medicines for our souls. Consider how easy they are, and how efficacious ; for, washed in the waters of baptism, our souls are cured of the leprosy of sin which they con-

tracted in Adam, much better than Naaman was purified of his in the waters of the Jordan. Compare this medicine with the bloody knife of the circumcision, and acknowledge the benignity of Christ and the gentle meekness of this Good Shepherd. Review in like manner the other sacraments, and giving the Lord thanks for them, take heed how thou shouldst use and profit by such salutary medicines; weep over the negligence thou hast until now shown in their use, and firmly purpose to amend for the future.

Third Point.—Consider how great a mercy is this that the Lord has done thee, and which He refused to the flock of the angels, though so exalted, when touched by the disease of pride; for the Lord did not grant to them medicine wherewith to recover the grace they had lost, but in the instant in which they sinned He cast them into hell. Consider what had been thy lot had God used thee as rigorously. What would not the devils give to-day for this medicine, or for one more powerful, however laborious and painful might be its use, to cure their ills, to restore their lost health, and to bring them back to the grace of God and the inheritance of glory. Doubtless there is nothing so arduous or so painful that they would not eagerly and gratefully embrace to obtain this benefit. Endeavour with all possible earnestness to prize the mercy that God has done thee; be not ungrateful for His benefits, lest He deprive thee of them, but make use of these spiritual medicines, for such was the intention of the Lord when He instituted them for thy welfare.

Fourth Point.—Consider of what the myrrh of these medicines is composed; not of herbs nor of the sap of trees, nor of the roots of the earth, nor of the essence of flowers, but of the most precious Blood of Christ, Who, like a Good Shepherd, opened His veins and gave it to heal thy wounds and cure thy infirmities. This was the balsam, as St. Bernard says, that the Tree of Life gave for the restoration of thy life. He chose to be wounded and torn to heal thy wounds and sores with the balsam of

His Blood. O Lord, to what an excess has the tenderness of Thy love gone towards one who has so greatly offended Thee, since Thou hast done more for me than I could have imagined or asked of Thee ! Ponder of what sort would be the charity of a man, who, seeing another sick and incurable, should open his own veins with a knife, and shed his blood, and remain lacerated in order to heal the wounds of his friend, and what gratitude would be due for so tender a love from him who was its object. Draw hence what thou owest to God, and how little it is that thou dost and endurest for Him ; behold thy infirmities and the disease of thy evil habits ; and since thou hast such a Physician and Shepherd, cast thyself at His Feet, humbly beseeching Him to heal thee, to cure thee of thy infirmities, and to purify thy soul of the leprosy of sin, that thou mayst be pleasing to Him, and worthy to enter the fold of His glory in the company of His elect.

EIGHTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE QUALITIES THAT SHOULD DISTINGUISH THE
CHOSEN LAMBS OF CHRIST'S FOLD.

First Point.—The first quality is that which Christ mentions in the Gospel, namely, that as He knows all the lambs of His flock, so they know Him for their own Shepherd. Place thy hand on thy breast, and see whether thou knowest and lovest Him as thou shouldst, and whether thy heart is occupied with Him, or whether it spends itself on the worthless things of this world. Humble thyself in His presence, beg of Him light to know Him, and grace to love Him as thou art bound to do, withdrawing thy heart from all that is earthly to fix it on thy Creator.

Second Point.—The second quality Christ mentions is the obedience of His lambs to His voice. "They hear My voice," He says, that is, they follow and obey it, travelling the way I direct them. Take heed and consider how many calls the Divine Pastor has given thee for the salvation of thy soul, and how often He touches thy heart, inviting thee to greater perfection, to leave vice and follow virtue; and thou turnest a deaf ear and answerest not His voice. Weep for thy past blindness, beg His pardon with tears, and dispose thyself to hear and obey Him in whatever He may command thee, lest thou fall into the hands of the infernal wolves and into eternal death.

Third Point.—Consider how the sheep belong not to themselves, but to their shepherd, to whom, as their rightful owner, they render all they have, their milk, their young, their wool, and lastly themselves; in which thou hast clear demonstration that thou art to possess nothing as thine, but as belonging to thy Master, Who is God. Whatever thou dost, or hast, thy property, goods, strength, knowledge, talent, intellect, thy memory, thy will, and lastly thy life and thyself, as of a sheep of His flock nourished by His blood—all is His. Cast thyself at His feet, and say to Him from the depth of thy heart: My Shepherd and my Master, all that I am and have, my soul, my body, my life, and all my powers, works, words, and thoughts, all are Thine; dispose of me as of a sheep of Thy flock, and give me grace to deserve to belong to it, having nothing of my own, all being Thine, and myself wholly dedicated to and ready for Thy service.

Fourth Point.—The last quality of sheep is that they leave not their shepherd, but follow him resignedly, showing no resistance or opposition, but only extreme meekness and patience, even though he lead them to death, which they accept at his hand. In like manner the lambs of Christ's fold, and those who are His faithful servants, follow Him meekly, and carry their cross after

Him, travelling with equanimity to death, if need be, to lay down their life for His love. To this degree of love thou must attain if thou wouldst belong to the chosen flock of the Lord. Prepare thyself to suffer, take up thy cross, and follow Him in the trials that assail thee, offering thyself to carry it valiantly ; for if thou be His companion on this road, thou wilt also share with Him the crown of heaven.

NINETEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE APPARITIONS CHRIST MADE TO HIS APOSTLES
DURING THE FORTY DAYS PREVIOUS TO HIS ASCEN-
SION—(ACTS I.)

First Point.—Consider how St. Luke says that, for forty days before ascending into heaven, Christ appeared many times to His disciples, speaking to them of the kingdom of God. In which thou shouldst ponder, in the first place, that Christ compensated for the three days' absence of His Passion and death by forty days of His glory, appearing to His disciples, and visiting them in His risen and glorious state, consoling and encouraging them in their orphanhood, and promising them the Holy Spirit to remain always with them. From which thou hast to draw very great confidence in God in thy drynesses and labours, knowing that for each day of His absence He will compensate shortly by many of assistance and spiritual comfort. Hope in the Lord and do good, and thou wilt experience the grace of His consolation.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ appeared to the disciples, as St. Luke says, not only alive, but glorious ; communicating to them a share of His glory, and encouraging them, by His example and words, to labour in

His service, and to endure all trials patiently for His love. Contemplate the care that, as a solicitous Shepherd, He has of His chosen ones, and how He teaches thee to care for His interests, and specially for His lambs, even though thou be raised to the highest dignities; learn also how, at all times and on all occasions, God visits His elect, never neglecting a single one. Beg of Him not to forget thee, but to visit and console thee with His presence in the manner that may best serve His glory and the good of thy soul.

Third Point.—Consider what St. Luke says—namely, that during these visits He always spoke of the kingdom of God, in order to enkindle a lively desire of it in their hearts. These are the conversations thou shouldst hold in the visits thou makest and receivest, speaking always of the kingdom of God, and of spiritual things which lead to Him, and banishing from thy lips all vain conversations, which are of no profit to the soul. Beg of the Lord to grant thee this favour, and meditate in His presence how thou canst fulfil this resolution with the aid of His grace, which He refuses to no one who disposes himself to receive it.

Fourth Point.—These forty days are, as St. Austin tells us, a symbol of the lives of the just, during which our Redeemer assists them invisibly, and visits them frequently, consoling them, encouraging, and guiding them on the way to heaven. From which thou shouldst derive great consolation, knowing that the Lord assists thee; and great energy to perform all good works, knowing that thou hast His grace, with the aid of which nothing is difficult; for all things are possible and easy, as St. Paul himself experienced, in Him who strengthens us.¹ Turn thine eyes to the Lord who assists thee, beg of Him to comfort and succour thee in all thine actions, and to give thee counsel and courage, as He did to His apostles, and thou wilt feel in all things the effect of His Divine favour.

¹ Philip. iv. 13.

TWENTIETH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE ARGUMENTS AND REASONS BY WHICH CHRIST
PROVED HIS GLORIOUS RESURRECTION—(ACTS I.)

First Point.—St. Luke says, that for the space of forty days before ascending into heaven, Christ appeared many times to His disciples, proving to them, by many arguments and reasons, the truth of His Resurrection, and the opportuneness and importance thereof. In which thou shouldst observe the value our Saviour placed on this article of faith, since He remained so many days, and came so many times to His apostles, to persuade them of it, and to banish from their hearts any shadow of doubt that might remain there. From which thou shouldst draw great esteem of this doctrine of the Resurrection, and no less gratitude to the Saviour for having risen, and given thee knowledge and faith of this mystery, which thou shouldst contemplate and meditate many times, taking part in it, rejoicing at His glory, and encouraging thyself, by the sight of it, to love and serve Him, and to suffer for His love in the hope of thy resurrection.

Second Point.—Consider that these arguments were not only of words, bringing forward reasons, and quoting the Scriptures to prove their truth ; but they were also of deeds, which are more efficacious, showing His wounds to His apostles, and eating with them, giving Himself to be handled, risen and glorious, and at the same time producing in their souls ineffable joy and peace, and a celestial sweetness and delight. These are the most powerful arguments to convince the minds and attract the hearts of men to the truth : we cannot deny what we see ; and, as Seneca says, example is more powerful than words. Whence thou shouldst learn to preach more by the former than by the latter. If thou wouldst honour

God and be useful to thy neighbour, learn to use works more than words, giving such an example of life that all those who see thee may learn from the disciple the perfection of the Master, and so may praise the Lord our God. Place thy hand on thy breast, and see whether thou hast attracted thy neighbour to the knowledge and service of God, or deterred Him from it, by the example of thy past life. Humble thyself before God, and weep over the scandal thou hast given, and the souls that have been lost through thee : beg of the Lord with tears grace to repair the past, and to give such an example of life as may be for the edification of all.

Third Point.—Consider the evidences that Christ gave of the Resurrection, the first of which was to lay aside the winding-sheet, and clothe Himself with the properties of glory that the blessed enjoy, entering amongst His disciples, the doors being shut, manifesting Himself impassible, subtile, and resplendent. Thou also shouldst arise from the death of sin to the life of grace, and from thy lukewarmness to fervour ; for, as St. Paul says, Christ arose for the glory of the Father, and so we must arise to a new life, and give proof of it, leaving the swathing-bands of evil customs and earthly affections, banishing the darkness of evil counsels which have obscured the light of the heart, and clothing ourselves with a high esteem for spiritual concerns, and for the light and counsels of our superiors, despising all things here below, and aspiring after things celestial.

Fourth Point.—Another proof by action was the showing His wounds, giving them to be touched, eating with His disciples, and manifesting Himself alive in their presence. All this was for thy good ; for which give Him infinite thanks, at the same time striving to imitate Him by the resurrection and renovation of thy life, endeavouring that it may be such as shall be patent to all, and that all may see and experience its effects. See for how many years thou hast been amongst men as one dead, carrying in a living body a soul dead to God and

to His grace ; and change thy life, dying to the world and living to Christ. He gave proof of His Resurrection by eating with His disciples ; thou shouldst give it by frequenting His Table, and disposing thyself to receive Him worthily ; and as Christ showed His wounds, thou shouldst show those of thy penance, mortification, and patience, suffering pains and wounds for His love, as He bore them for thine. O my Lord ! would that I were able and knew how to arise to a new and immortal life, never more to return to the death of sin. This, Lord, is not a work for me, but for Thine almighty arm : work in me this wonder, raising me up from death to a life of high perfection, that I may be able to serve Thee as I ought ; and may the angels and seraphim and all creatures glorify Thee for endless ages.

TWENTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE PROOFS OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

First Point.—Consider the words which Christ would use to prove His Resurrection to His disciples, and the reasons He would give them in evidence thereof ; amongst which the words of the Holy Scriptures would hold the first place, proving to them, by the testimony of many of the prophets, that He had to die and rise again, and showing, as St. Luke relates in his Gospel, how already were accomplished in Him the things prophesied of the Messiah by the ancients. Listen to the words of Christ ; consider how in His Person were fulfilled all the prophecies concerning Him ; and draw thence, first, great faith in the Word of God, and a high esteem for it when pronounced by the lips of His doctors and preachers, by whose voice He teaches us the

Catholic Faith and the road to heaven. Secondly, that as in Christ were accomplished all the things determined by God and written by the prophets, in like manner will be fulfilled in thee those things that God has decreed according to His holy and divine will, to which thou shouldst bow down, saying over and over again, "Lord, Thy will be done in me ; and may all that Thou hast disposed and ordained concerning me be accomplished."

Second Point.—The second reason was because, as our Lord Himself said, it behoved that He should suffer, and should then enter His glory, and that He should arise from the dead to reward His Body, which had suffered so much for men. From this argument thou shouldst draw a desire of great patience and mortification, persuading thyself that it behoves thee to suffer in order to merit the heavenly crown, and that if Christ had to enter the glory which belonged to Him, as the Son and Heir of God, by the Cross and by patience, so by these also is it necessary that thou shouldst enter the glory which is not thine. Enter into account with thyself, and, in the presence of God, see what patience and mortification thou hast hitherto manifested, and what title thou hast to ask for heaven ; and rouse thyself for the future to carry thy cross in company with the Saviour, in order to be crowned with Him.

Third Point.—Another reason was in order to encourage our hope by the reward of the Resurrection ; for, as St. Paul says, if Christ had not risen again, our hope in our own resurrection would fail us, and we should believe that our bodies were to return to earth without recovering life and rising again to receive the reward of their labours. To encourage this faith and confidence Christ rose again, and manifested Himself glorified to His disciples, teaching them that in like manner they would arise again, as will also all who imitate His life. See with the eyes of thy soul Christ risen, glorified, and more luminous than the sun ; contemplate delibe-

rately His glory, and how His sufferings had an end, but His glory shall have none. Consider that a like reward awaits thee if thou imitate Him in thy actions; and arouse thyself energetically to serve Him, and to suffer for His love with the hope of so great a reward.

Fourth Point.—There was yet another reason for the Resurrection of the Saviour, which was to show His omnipotence and display His charity. He showed His omnipotence in raising His dead Body by His power, demonstrating in action the word He had spoken, that He had power to assume His soul, to lay it down and to take it up again, as was seen in His death and Resurrection. He displayed His charity in raising up with Himself many saints, who came into the city and appeared to many, as St. Matthew says,¹ and were unimpeachable witnesses of His Resurrection, all of whom would doubtless, in the first place, come to the Most Holy Virgin, and would congratulate her on the Resurrection of her priceless Son. Linger on this most sweet thought, and draw thence sweet honey of devotion for thy soul; recognise the divine omnipotence, and that nothing is impossible to God's power and will, and quicken thy hope of all thou needest from His hand with the confidence of obtaining it. See also how He hastened the time of the Resurrection, and, without waiting for the last day, recalled to life the saints who arose with Him. Confide in His compassion that thou wilt obtain what thou askest, even though it be necessary therefore to hasten the time of His mercy; learn likewise to be charitable to thy brethren, and not to limit the good thou dost to times and places. Beg of the Lord this grace by that which He did these saints; make them thine advocates, and He will grant it to thee abundantly.

¹ Matt. xxvii.

TWENTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the third Sunday after Easter.

ON THE GOSPEL FOR THE DAY—(JOHN XVI.)

This Gospel contains a brief discourse that Christ made to His disciples before going to suffer, in which He told them that in a short time they would lose sight of Him, and in a short time they would see Him again; and knowing that they wished to question Him on His meaning, He declared it to them, and told them that He spoke of His departure for heaven, which would cause them sorrow, but that in a short time He would see them again, and would fill their hearts with a joy which none could take from them.

First Point.—Consider the sorrow that Christ felt at being obliged to leave His disciples, and the words with which He consoles them, saying that He will see them again in a short time, and that their hearts shall be bathed with joy at His sight. Enter by meditation into that loving breast, and contemplate the flames of charity that burn therein; rejoice to have so sweet and loving a Father; see how thou canst correspond to so great a love, and beg a spark of that fire wherewith to inflame thy heart.

Second Point.—Consider how brief are God's absences and how certain are His consolations; for if He withdraws from us, it is for a short time, and then He comes with haste and redoubled consolations. Let not thy heart fail thee if He sometimes leaves thee or hides Himself from thy soul, but rather hope that in His mercy He will soon revisit thee, as He did His disciples, and will bathe thy soul with ineffable joy and heavenly consolations.

Third Point.—Consider how the disciples understood not at first the words of Christ, for perchance, though He speak to us, we comprehend not what He teaches; but the Lord explained Himself further to them, answer-

ing beforehand the doubt they had not yet expressed. O Lord, how Thou preventest us with Thy mercies, for Thou grantest them even before they are asked. Blessed be Thou a thousand times for Thy great mercy and liberality. Give me a great confidence in Thee, and make me as liberal in doing good to my neighbours as Thou art in Thy mercy towards me.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ says that His disciples were to be made sad by His departure, although it were but for a short time, and that they would rejoice at His return; for there is nothing so sad as the absence of God, nor so joyful as His visitation. As the absence of the sun causes dismal darkness to the earth and its presence joyful light, in like manner the absence of God causes clouds of sadness to envelop the soul, whilst His presence brings the light of great joy and delight. O my soul! lose not thy God, for then, even hadst thou the whole world, thou wouldst remain in most dismal darkness, but if thou possess Him and if He visit thy house, His presence alone will bathe it in delight. O Lord, chastise me not so severely as to withdraw from me, even for a single moment; let me lose everything rather than lose Thee; be Thou with me, for better is one day in Thy house than millions of millions in the habitations of the world.

TWENTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE SHORTNESS OF THIS LIFE AND THE ETERNITY
OF THE LIFE TO COME.

First Point.—Consider what St. Augustin teaches, namely, that the little while of which Christ speaks means the duration of this life, which, compared with eternity, is like a breath, and its duration so short that

it seems but a moment. To convince thyself of this, place in one scale the longest life, be it of a hundred or two hundred years, and in the other the future and eternal life, and thou wilt see that, however long it be, this life fades like a shadow and appears as nothing in proportion to the future and eternal life. Dive into this eternity, and draw from its consideration a firm resolution to despise this worthless and perishable life, and to covet the one that is eternal and which shall never end ; lose not that which is of such value for what lasts so short a time ; and if, as St. Austin says, thou dost undergo so much labour to live a few days in this world, why wilt thou not undergo far more to live eternally in the next, the days of this life being short and evil, whilst those of the other are innumerable and blessed. Resolve then to suffer in this short life for Christ in order to rejoice with Him eternally in the next. All the suffering of this life is but little ; and, as St. Paul says, a moment of suffering here achieves for us a weight of eternal glory hereafter.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ says that the world will rejoice and His servants will weep in this life ; but once this short drama ended, the parts will be changed ; the wicked will weep eternally and the good will rejoice for ever. Remember that there are not two glories, and that, as St. Bernard tells us, it is almost impossible to enjoy bliss both here and hereafter ; that those who enjoy it here are deprived of it hereafter, whilst those who here do penance and mortify themselves rejoice in the next life. Consider deliberately which of the two thou wouldst possess, for if thou give thyself up now to the delights, pleasures, honours, and applause of the world, thou wilt lose future glory ; and if, despising these, thou dost embrace the Cross and penance, and live in silence and humility, thou wilt obtain eternal felicity. Chose now, therefore, that which later thou wouldst wish to have chosen : beg grace of the Lord to abandon vice, to embrace virtue, and to make up thy mind to follow Him resolutely on the way of the Cross.

Third Point.—Consider how deluded are they who, for the sake of spending pleasantly the brief space of this life, lose eternal delights, and how deceived they will find themselves at the hour of death and at the judgment-seat of God, when they see all their enjoyments and pleasures pass away like the wind, and they find themselves condemned to suffer for ever ; how joyful, on the contrary, will the just then be to see their labours and penances past and their repose and glory begun ! The siren is represented as singing all her life and dying in bitter grief ; the swan, on the contrary, weeps during life and sings at the time of death ; thus on a life of pleasure follows a mournful deathbed, whilst a sorrowful life has a joyful ending. The siren symbolises the wicked and the swan the good ; one of these two fates must necessarily be thine ; see now, whilst thou hast time, which thou wouldst choose at the hour of death. Be not blinded by the present ; but rather be wise and prudent, and provide for the future ; ask the Lord to give thee strength to choose at once the better part, and that which is for His greater glory and the good of thy soul.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ tells us that “ A woman, when she is in labour, hath sorrow, . . . but when she hath brought forth a child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.” Thus the joy of the just in glory is so great that it effaces the memory of their past toils. Fix thine eyes on the saints in bliss, contemplate their glory, and see how utterly forgotten are the labours and penances that they endured in this life ; see how they rejoice in the next, and will rejoice eternally ; how for no imaginable consideration would they return to this world or change their happy condition. Urge thyself by their example to live holily, and follow in their footsteps and in those of thy Redeemer and Master ; for if thou be their companion in the fight, thou wilt also share with them the crown of glory.

*TWENTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.**For the Tuesday.*ON THE LOVE OF CHRIST AND THE PROMISES HE MAKES IN
THE GOSPEL—(JOHN XVI.)

First Point.—Consider what St. John Chrysostom says, namely, that the little time of which Christ speaks, during which He says His disciples will not see Him, is the time of His Passion; and He calls it little and short, or an “hour;” as is said by St. John, “Jesus knowing that His hour was come;” that is, the hour of His Passion; for although they were so many and so bitter, yet the greatness of His love was such, that it all seemed to Him little to suffer for man. Lay stress on the consideration of this point, and praise and extol the immense charity of the Saviour, who so loved and esteemed thee and suffered so much for thee. Give Him many thanks for it, and be ashamed in His presence, seeing thy tepidity and pusillanimity, that thou hast not courage to suffer for Him, and that every effort thou hast to make for His sake appears to thee great and insupportable. Blush at the complaints thou indulgest in and the little fortitude thou dost exhibit; entreat our Lord to bestow on thee one spark of the fire of love that burns in His breast, in order to suffer much with joy for Him.

Second Point.—Meditate on those words of David in the 125th Psalm, “Going they went and wept, casting their seeds. But coming they shall come with joyfulness, carrying their sheaves.” Ponder with St. Jerome how we sow little and with grief, and gather much and with joy. For when the overflowing fruit of that which was sown is reaped abundantly, then is the labour and cost of the sowing accounted well spent. Now is the time for the sowing, and death is the time for reaping the fruits of the works done in life; each one shall reap

what he has sown. If any one sow the thorns of evil works, then shall he reap pains and torments ; but if he sow the seed of good and holy actions, then shall he reap the fruit of eternal life, with such great increase that it shall be as a hundred for one. Little wilt thou have to labour, and the harvest will be great. Think on this, and resolve to work with fervour in the vineyard of the Lord during the short remainder of thy life, and at thy death thou shalt reap abundant fruits of glory.

Third Point.—Consider what Christ says in the Gospel, that a woman in giving birth to a child has pain and grief, and shows regret that she has conceived on account of the suffering she endures ; but that hour being past, she forgets her resolve and bears other children. Consider thence how many good resolutions of serving God and amending thy life thou hast conceived in times of sickness and suffering ; but that time past, thou hast forgotten them, and continued thine evil habits as before. Weep over thine inconstancy ; beg of God the grace to begin to serve Him with fortitude and perseverance to the end ; and if thou be faithful to thy promises, thou shalt experience His most liberal favours.

Fourth Point.—Consider the words with which Christ winds up His discourse, “ I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you.” Here thou shouldst ponder the certainty of eternal happiness, and its continuance without decrease or diminution ; for its very greatness would be painful unless it were enjoyed with security and without fear of forfeiture or termination. Meditate deeply this promise, and compare the delights of heaven with those of this earth, the joys God reserves for His servants with those the world offers to its followers ; see how frail and short-lived are these latter, how great and eternal are the former, and take heart from this consideration to cast aside all that the world can bestow, and to covet only what God promises.

*TWENTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.**For the Wednesday.*

ON THE GLORY OF THE SOUL OF CHRIST OUR LORD.

First Point.—Consider how immense, sublime, and incomprehensible must have been the glory of the Soul of Christ our Lord, the co-equal Son of God, and as such hypostatically united to the Divinity, which It saw and enjoyed intimately from the first instant of His conception ; and in this respect, as well as in the brightness and clearness of Its vision of God, and in all others, It exceeds all the angels and saints of heaven by all the distance that exists between a son by nature and a son by adoption. Wherefore this most Holy Soul enjoys such glory as far surpasses all that can be imagined ; for if, as Isaias says, and St. John repeats, “The eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God has prepared for the least of His elect,” what must be the glory He determined and prepared for the greatest of all, Who is Jesus Christ ? Beg of God to give thee one ray of His light wherewith to comprehend some small portion of that felicity, and to relish it in union with the Lord Himself.

Second Point.—Consider the greatness and sovereignty of this glory and beatitude of the Soul of Christ ; not alone as regards the essential part of the beatific vision, by which it comprehends, as far as is possible to a creature, the essence of God, but also on account of the accidental glory which from so many sources augments the mighty river of its beatitude. For it sees and knows in God all the past, the present, and the future of all things possible ; all the attributes and the greatness of the Divinity ; all the good and holy works that have been and are being performed ; the many souls that

abandon sin and are saved by the merits of the Blood of Christ ; and all these things increase Its glory, together with the praises that It receives from all the heavenly courtiers and from all creatures. Contemplate the Soul of this Lord as a resplendent sun bathed in brilliant light, or as an immense ocean augmented by the currents of many and abundant streams. Consider the greatness of Its capacity, the intensity of Its glory ; rejoice with Its joy, and give God millions of millions of thanks for the graces He has given to this soul, enriching It with so many and such high degrees of glory.

Third Point.—Contemplate the delight that all the heavenly courtiers, both angels and men, and in particular the Queen of Angels, receive from the glory of Christ, and the congratulations that they offer to His most Holy Soul, and how they rejoice in Its glory ; join thou with them to enjoy it, and to offer Him thanks and congratulations for it, and ponder the thanks that the Soul of the Saviour Itself gave to the Eternal Father for the graces He bestowed on It, and is continually giving to Him, with unutterable gratitude and delight.

Fourth Point.—Lay stress on the consideration of the means by which the Soul of the Saviour arrived at this greatness of glory and beatitude, which increased that which was essential to Him, and which It received liberally from the mighty hand of God. Review the acts of highest merit which It performed during the whole of His life, and learn to merit and obtain some degree of the infinite glory to which it attained.

*TWENTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.**For the Thursday.*

ON THE GLORY OF THE BODY OF CHRIST OUR LORD.

First Point.—Contemplate in like manner the glory of the Body of the Saviour, more beautiful than the light, more resplendent than the sun through the qualities of impassibility, agility, subtilty, and luminousness which above all the blessed in heaven It possesses in the most perfect degree. Behold Him in the centre of the throne of glory illuminating and glorifying the heavens far more than the sun does the earth, as was seen by St. John, and all the heavenly courtiers giving Him praise and singing psalms and canticles of glory. Consider what must be His glory from whom the inhabitants of heaven derive their bliss, which is increased by the vision of their Lord glorified by such beatitude; and draw hence affections of joy and satisfaction at the sight of thy Redeemer surrounded by such immense glory and majesty.

Second Point.—Recapitulate the five senses and then the interior faculties of the Saviour, and meditate the felicity and glory which He enjoys in each one of them. How His eyes are recreated by the sight of His own glory; His ears by the music and the praises of the choirs of angels and the saints in paradise; His sense of smell by perfumes sweeter than we can imagine; His taste by the savour of beatitude; His touch by all celestial delights. Behold His imagination glorified by the image of God and of all creatures in their highest perfection, His memory satisfied and rejoiced by the presence of all things desirable. Consider how His understanding is glorified by the contemplation of God as He is in Himself, and His will by loving Him intimately without fear of losing Him. Oh, glory of glories and light in-

comprehensible ! Blessed be thou, O Lord, Who hast merited such glory ; let all creatures praise and bless Thee for the glory Thou enjoyest. Would that I had the tongues of all creatures wherewith to praise and bless Thee for endless ages.

Third Point.—Consider, moreover, the prerogatives that Christ enjoys in heaven above all the blessed, as Lord of the angels, as Redeemer and Judge of men, Advocate of sinners, and Chief of the human race, and as eternal Priest and sovereign Pontiff. Contemplate the greatness and value of His merits on account of the hypostatical union with the Word, as well as of the infinite grace He possessed, and of the perfection with which He merited the crowns of martyr, virgin, doctor, and teacher of the universe. On which account St. John¹ said he saw Him, “and on His head were many diadems,” all of which contribute to increase the ocean of His glory ; and if any one of these titles suffices to render the just supremely happy and blessed, with what an ocean of infinite delight must not so many and such excellent titles have inundated Christ our Lord ! Join the angels in their admiration of His greatness and felicity, rejoice with them in His beatitude, and beg Him to extend His Hand to thee that thou mayst ascend to it.

Fourth Point.—Consider the steps by which the Saviour ascended to merit this glory ; review His holy life, meditating His actions and virtues, the interior as well as the exterior ones, and endeavour to imitate His example in this world in order to enjoy Him in the next.

¹ Apoc. xix.

TWENTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE GLORY OF CHRIST IN HIS ELECT.

First Point.—Consider the intense desire that Christ had for the happiness of mankind, all that He did for that end, what He suffered for the salvation of men, and how often and with what earnestness He prayed for them. And if, as St. Austin says, the joy afforded by the possession of a thing is proportioned to the extent of the desire we have of it, thou canst thence estimate the joy of Christ at beholding the vast number of the elect who, through His merits, are in the fruition of glory, and that which He experiences each time that a soul enters heaven. Rejoice at the joy of thy Saviour, and endeavour to be one of the elect in order to increase His glory ; weep over that of which He is deprived by those who are condemned through their own perversity, and entreat the Lord to send apostolical preachers to direct them in the road to heaven.

Second Point.—The vision of each one of the blessed is a sight so delightful and pleasing that it increases the glory of those who behold it ; ponder then how greatly that of Christ must be increased by the number of the elect, who all enjoy heaven through His merits ; the more so, that He not only knows clearly the degrees of essential as well as of accidental glory which each one enjoys, but also that He loves each and all most tenderly. Moreover, each is resplendent with the merits of His Blood, and He gathers in them abundant fruits of His labours, as did St. Paul¹ in the faithful he converted, for which reason he calls them “ my joy and my crown ; ” and such they will be to Christ in glory, and He will have as many crowns as there are blessed in heaven. Enkindle in thy

¹ Philip. iv.

heart a fervent zeal for the salvation of souls in order that the Lord may be glorified through them.

Third Point.—Consider, that if a good son receives honour and glory from the honour of his parents, what glory must not Christ enjoy and possess eternally from the glory of His most Holy Mother, and how well spent He considers all His labours in order to see her raised to so sublime a throne of bliss. Ponder also that which the most Blessed Virgin must receive from the sight of her Son thus glorified and honoured above all creatures; see how those two celestial luminaries, like unto the sun and the moon, reflect on each other in heaven, and reciprocally augment each other's glory and resplendency, the glory of Christ being increased by the sight of Mary's, and hers likewise augmented by the vision of Christ. Gaze thou on both, contemplate Their glory, and earnestly entreat Them to allow thee to participate therein.

Fourth Point.—Consider the glory that Christ receives from that of His apostles, and then from that of the martyrs, and thus review all the companies of the blessed. Observe how Christ thanks His Eternal Father for the mercy He has shown them as though it had been exhibited towards Himself, offering it all to His honour and glory. Delight in the beatitude of this Lord; give Him great praise, and direct all thou dost to His honour and glory.

TWENTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE GLORY THAT CHRIST AND HIS BLESSED MOTHER
RECEIVE FROM THAT OF ST. JOSEPH.

ALTHOUGH, as was said in the previous Meditation, Christ our Lord receives great increase of glory from that of all the saints; yet, as in heaven all are not equal, but

differ from each other in degrees of glory as star from star in magnitude and brilliancy, so likewise does the Redeemer of the world receive greater delight from those that are higher in glory. Thus it cannot be denied but that He must receive a great increase of glory from that of the glorious St. Joseph, both on account of his great glory and also because of his having been Christ's foster-father on earth, and every son must experience joy and contentment from the honour his father receives.

First Point.—Consider first the sanctity and merits of the glorious St. Joseph, whom God chose for the worthy spouse of His Holy Mother and His own reputed father. Ponder how great were his humility, his meekness, his charity; how ardent the love of God and of his neighbour that burnt within his breast; how great were his patience and obedience in so many travels and journeys that he undertook for Christ's sake; how intense was the love he bore to Christ and to the Holy Virgin; and to what high degrees of sanctity and conformity to the will of God his most holy soul attained. For God, searching through all ages, past, present, and future, chose the glorious St. Joseph from amongst all men as a spouse for the Blessed Virgin suitable to her in holiness and manner of life: a helpmate (*adjutorium simile sibi*), a companion, and coadjutor most similar to herself. Give thanks to Heaven for what was wrought in this holy patriarch; rejoice at his beatitude, and beg God to render thee like unto him as he was made like unto his Holy Spouse, and ask of the Blessed Virgin to intercede for thee that thy desire may be fulfilled.

Second Point.—Consider the glorious St. Joseph in heaven both in body and soul, for it is most probable that, as grave authors affirm, he was one of the saints who arose again with Christ, and that he was taken up by Him triumphantly into heaven, and thus, as he was like the Blessed Virgin in virtue, so also was he similar in merits and in the glory which he received in heaven, which is so great that we may believe that, after that of

Christ and of His most Holy Mother, his is the greatest or one of the greatest in heaven. Contemplate his beatitude; behold him crowned and favoured by Christ, by Whose side he sits on the throne of glory; offer him a thousand congratulations, rejoice at his felicity, and beg of him to bear thee in mind in order to favour thee and obtain graces for thee from the Lord.

Third Point.—Consider the glory that Christ receives from beholding His adopted father in so high a degree of glory, that which the Blessed Virgin likewise experiences from the same cause, and also that which St. Joseph himself enjoys from the vision of theirs; what congratulations they offer each other, and how unutterably intense is their delight. For if a son rejoices at the honour and good fortune of his parents, and a father considers as his own that of his son, and a spouse that of her spouse, how can it be doubted that, united as were these holy lovers by the bond of closest charity on earth but yet more in heaven, each must consider as his own the beatitude of the others; and thus the glory of St. Joseph increases that of Christ and of His Blessed Mother, whilst theirs augments his, each rejoicing most cordially in the beatitude of the others in proportion as they love, know, esteem, and desire each other's felicity. Oh, happy lovers! oh, immense charity! oh, ineffable glory! oh, blissful delight! Praised, blessed, and glorified be God in His saints, and glorified also be the saints themselves in God for ever and ever.

Fourth Point.—Having considered all this, turn thine eyes on thyself, and meditate the steps by which the glorious patriarch St. Joseph rose to this glory, and see how thou shouldst imitate him in order to obtain some share in it. Beg him to assist thee to follow him. Beseech God to extend His hand towards thee, and to grant thee grace to reproduce His virtues in thy soul. Implore the Queen of Heaven to obtain them for thee by her intercession; for with such patrons thou mayst be very confident of obtaining a happy issue to thy petition.

TWENTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

For the fourth Sunday after Easter.

ON THE GOSPEL—(JOHN XVI.)

St. John tells us how Christ, being about to return to His Eternal Father, consoled His disciples by telling them that it was for their good that He left them, because He would send them the Holy Spirit, Who would bear witness to Him and convince the world of its wickedness, and at the same time would instruct them in those things which until then He had been unable to teach them.

First Point.—Consider how Christ came into the world in obedience to His Father, and having accomplished the work of redemption for which He came, He returns, likewise in obedience to the Father Who sent Him. Wherein He teaches thee what submission thou shouldst exhibit towards thy superiors, and how expedient it is to undertake no great work in the service of God or of souls except in obedience to him who stands in God's place with regard to us, and how all such works should begin from him, and the accomplishment thereof be referred to him. Learn this lesson with regard to all thine actions, and beg of the Lord to give thee grace to serve Him by them and to refer them all to His honour and glory.

Second Point.—Consider how sad the disciples were at hearing that Christ was about to depart and leave them ; for as it is difficult to uproot a tree which is planted in the earth, so the love of Christ which had taken root in the hearts of the disciples caused them great sorrow when He withdrew from them. Place thy hand on thy heart and observe whether thou dost grieve at His absences, and whether thou sorrowest when He leaves thee dry and without devotion. Weep over thy want of love for Him and the coldness of thy heart in His service. Behold, on the other hand, how rooted thou art in the

perishable things of this earth, since thou dost regret so much any loss of property or diminution of honour, health, or convenience ; and for a slight interest thou wouldst move the earth and dost grow angry or disquieted. Cleanse thy heart of these earthly affections, and fix it on God alone and on heavenly things.

Third Point.—Consider the benignity with which the Saviour consoled His disciples, telling them that He was going to His Father in order to send them the Holy Spirit, and that it was all for their good. Let such great goodness ravish thy heart, and rejoice at having such a Master, so holy, so benign, so pitiful, so loving, and so great a benefactor to His elect. Beg of Him not to leave thee disconsolate by His absence, but to console and strengthen thee by sending His Holy Spirit the Comforter to thee, as He promised to do to His apostles.

Fourth Point.—Consider those last words with which He took leave of them, “I have yet many things to say to you : but you cannot bear them now ; but when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will teach you all truth.” Observe the prudence and benignity of the Saviour, Who would not overladden them with precepts, but taking account of their capacity, gave them such as were suitable for that time, reserving the rest for afterwards, when they should have received the abundant grace of the Holy Spirit ; for His yoke is sweet, and the burthen of His law light,¹ and proportional to the strength of man. Say not that it is heavy, since He so sweetly measures it to our powers ; the world burthens its lovers without pity or measure with intolerable burthens, wherewith it destroys, wastes, and overstrains their strength and health ; but God always lays on us less than we are able to carry, and sends His aid to alleviate and sweeten our labour. Give Him many thanks for this ; take courage to bear the sweet yoke of His law, and learn not to burthen thy neighbours with irksome laws and commands disproportioned to their strength.

¹ Matt. xi.

THIRTIETH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE DISCOURSE OF CHRIST TO HIS APOSTLES
(JOHN XVI.)

First Point.—Christ says that He goes to the Father : consider where He goes and whither He directs all His steps, namely, to His Eternal Father, towards whom He directed them from the time He set foot on earth until He left this world, drawing ever nearer to Him whom He so loved and desired to please. Consider whither thou directest thy steps, whether thou travellest towards God and drawest nearer to Him, or to the vanity of the world and towards that which thou shouldst fly from and despise. Beg of Him to admit thee into His society, and to grant thee grace to abandon the crooked paths of the world and to direct all thy steps towards God.

Second Point.—Consider how lovingly Christ complained to His disciples that, having told them that He was going away, no one asked Him whither He was going or to whom. Wherein He shows how He likes to be questioned by His disciples on His mysteries and on the stages of His holy life, and that we should take Him for our Master, questioning Him and learning from Him as disciples. Draw hence fervent desires of questioning Him and consulting Him in all thy doubts, of having Him for thy Master, of meditating the various passages of His life, and of learning at His school the road to heaven.

Third Point.—Consider the silence of the disciples and the respect they had for their Master, since no one dared to ask Him whither He was going ; but He did not, therefore, leave them without notice of His departure, taking into account their humility and timidity. Whence thou shouldst learn the demeanour that becomes thee

with regard to thy superiors ; the respect in which thou shouldst hold them, remaining silent until they have done speaking, in order to listen to their admonitions ; and if thou hast to question them, await their answer in silence. If thou do this with humility, the Lord will teach thee as He taught His disciples on this occasion.

Fourth Point.—Consider those words of Christ, “It is expedient to you that I go ;” in which He shows that He was not going to the Father so much for His own advantage as for ours, seeking in all His actions our good and profit. O Father ! truly a Father Who considers the advantage of His sons before His own. Observe thine own conduct, and see whether in thy actions thou dost look to thy personal interest or to the service of Christ, whether thou dost consider His glory and His honour rather than thine own, whether thou seekest thy convenience and advantage or thy neighbour’s, and learn from thy Master to postpone all thy interests to His service. Beg of Him grace to practise so high a lesson and to follow so illustrious an example, in order that thou mayst deserve to enter in His company into the kingdom of God.

THIRTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY GHOST AND HIS COMING.

First Point.—Christ promises the Holy Ghost to His disciples in order that they may desire His coming and pray for it ; and He tells them that when He shall come He will convince the world of sin, because He comes to uproot the thorns of vice, to purify the world from sin, and to plant the sweet-smelling flowers of virtue. Enter by consideration into thy innermost soul and see the

thorns of vice which have, through thy malice and negligence, sprung up therein. Beg of Christ to send thee His Holy Spirit, and entreat the Holy Ghost Himself to come to purify and cleanse thee from the evil growth of vice, and to convert thy soul into a paradise adorned with the flowers of virtue. Acknowledge thy poverty, and say to Him with humility, "Lord, I of myself have nought but briars and thorns of vice and sins; such alone does my soul engender, such is the growth of my ill-disposed flesh: but let Thy Divine hand come and work this uncultivated soil, and change this vile and thorny ground into a fruitful field of virtues."

Second Point.—Consider which are the sins of which the Holy Spirit will convince the world. The first, Christ tells us, is that of its incredulity and want of faith, because after so many miracles and wonders, and after so much teaching of such holy doctrine, it refused to believe in Him. Place thy hand on thy breast and consider attentively whether He can convince thee of this sin. See how many wonders He has wrought in thee, and how thou yet failest to believe and to give thyself up to His service, and although thou dost confess Him with thy lips, thou deniest Him by thy works, performing them as though thou didst not believe His word, since thou dost not execute it. Weep over thy sins, and beg of God grace to cure thyself of them and to serve Him henceforth with perfection.

Third Point.—Consider the second sin of which the Holy Ghost is to convince the world when He comes, namely, against justice, that is, the justice of Christ and His sanctity, defending His innocence, and showing that He was holy, just, innocent, and unjustly accused and condemned, and that there is no true virtue but that which proceeds from Him; and lastly, bearing witness how He was received and honoured by His Eternal Father in heaven. Of all this He will bear testimony, and convince the world without any one being able to

answer Him; from which draw two conclusions: first, that it is a work of the Holy Spirit to defend the honour of Christ; secondly, that the Holy Ghost defends the honour of those who place theirs in His hands, and that He glorifies them before the world. Commit thine honour to His keeping, and He will protect it as He did that of the Redeemer of the world.

Fourth Point.—Finally, He will convince the world of judgment, because it allowed itself to be conquered by the devil, whom Christ vanquished and bound down in the dungeon of hell. Had He not defeated and enchained him it might seem as though men had some sort of cause for yielding to his weapons and falling into the snares of vice; but Christ having overcome him and holding him enchained, they are inexcusable, and the Holy Ghost will convince them that they fall and are enslaved through their own malice. See if He can convince thee of this sin, and whether by thy negligence thou dost allow thyself to be overcome by so weak an enemy; remember that Christ conquered him, disarmed him, and took away his power; and if he assail thee, strengthen thyself against him and yield not; raise thine eyes to Christ the conqueror, and beg His protection; He will give it thee, and thine enemies shall lie conquered at thy feet.

THIRTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE INTERIOR PEACE OF THE SOUL.

First Point.—Consider how Christ, when appearing to His disciples, saluted them with those sweet words, *Pax vobis*, "Peace be to you;" because peace is one of the fruits of the Holy Ghost and a singular favour from God, Who gives it to whom He pleases, and Who bestowed it

on His disciples on the day of His Resurrection. Beg of the Divine Majesty, since it is His gift, that He bestow it on thee, and that He grant thee this favour in virtue of the joy and glory of His Resurrection.

Second Point.—Consider the tranquillity and consolation enjoyed by a soul in the possession of this peace, which is a foreshadowing of heaven, where all enjoy most perfect peace without any feeling of disquiet in their soul, or of strife, or sorrow, and unutterable peace, joy, and delight in the Holy Ghost. On the other hand, consider the weariness, depression, and sadness which those persons endure who are deprived of this interior peace, who are ever uneasy, melancholy, and restless, bereft of all consolation and joy, and in whom hell is, as it were, foreshadowed. For although they may be steeped in exterior pleasures and delights, no drop passes their lips, for their hearts are consumed by that internal strife which wastes their souls with sorrow. Ponder the difference which exists between these two states; see how in the one perfect peace is enjoyed in the midst of the greatest poverty, whilst in the other a cruel warfare is endured in the midst of extreme opulence. Inflamm thy soul with lively desires of obtaining that peace and escaping this strife; purpose firmly to leave no stone unturned in the endeavour to possess it.

Third Point.—Consider in what this interior peace consists, namely, in peace with God and the possession of so clear a conscience that thy heart reproach thee with no sin nor any action contrary to the Divine Will. Interior strife, on the contrary, is born of an evil conscience and of the enmity which the wicked bear towards God; for which reason Isaias says, "There is no peace to the wicked."¹ Draw hence firm resolutions not to soil thy conscience or fall into sin for anything in the world, and rather to lose all things than to forfeit thy peace with God and the tranquillity of thy soul.

Fourth Point.—Consider the means whereby this peace

¹ Isaias xvii.

of soul is preserved, which are, as we said above, to live in the grace of God, to detach the heart from all earthly things, and to fix it on heavenly ones. All things here below are changeable, there is nothing permanent, and he that leans on such is moved by every wind and loses his peace; therefore is the heart of the wicked as the ocean, which every wind disturbs, and which rises and falls each day; thus do sinners vary with each change of the world, and they never remain long in the same condition; whilst the good are like the sun, which is ever the same, suffering neither change nor diminution. Place not thy trust in men, nor in the perishable goods of this world, but in God alone, Who changes not, and thou shalt enjoy eternal peace.

THIRTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON PEACE AND FRATERNAL CHARITY.

First Point.—Consider how Christ before departing for heaven said to His disciples, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you;" not such as the world gives, but permanent and solid peace. For it was His will that we as His children should always be at peace; and thus He says in the Gospel of St. John, "By this shall men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another." In like manner St. Austin tells us that fraternal charity is the sign and especial mark of the sheep of the fold of Christ, which distinguishes them from those of Satan. Ponder the importance of this virtue, and consider to which of these folds thou wouldst belong; beg of Christ to mark thee with that sign, and to grant thee grace to be united with thy brethren in love, peace, and solid charity.

Second Point.—Consider the fruits of peace and the

evils of discord, for the loss of peace with our neighbour causes the loss of peace with God, and therewith that of all good things, of joy, of consolation both interior and exterior, for time and for eternity. With peace, on the other hand, all good things are secured, increased, and multiplied, and thus, if only for personal interest, peace with our neighbour should be sought and maintained at any cost. Consider how often and for what slight cause thou hast forfeited this peace, and endeavour to recover and preserve it with all diligence and care, as a precious jewel from the hand of the Lord.

Third Point.—Consider the means whereby peace and fraternal charity are obtained and secured, which are: By wishing for thy neighbour that which thou desirest for thyself. By loving him as thyself, and not doing to him what thou wouldst not that he did unto thee. By bearing one another's burdens, as St. Paul tells us, and thus fulfilling the law of Christ: "Thy peace shall be in much patience." See how much others have to endure from thee, and bear thou with them. Break not the bond of charity for the sake of human interests, for divine interests are more important; weigh the one against the other, see how necessary it is to suffer much for the sake of peace, and beg of the Lord patience and love, and He will grant them to thee that thou mayst live at peace with all.

Fourth Point.—Consider the peace which Christ maintained towards all men, loving and doing good to all, even to His personal enemies, and how He purchased it at the cost of infinite patience. Remember that Christ is represented by each one of thy brethren, for He says,¹ "As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me." Ponder the respect and consideration thou wouldst show to the Lord Himself, and what patience and love thou wouldst manifest towards Him, and endeavour to exercise the like towards thy neighbours, and to be at peace with them, loving them and bearing

¹ Matt. xxv.

with them after the example of thy Redeemer. Ponder how much He suffers from thee, and how much thou shouldst suffer from thy neighbours for His love. Raise thine eyes to heaven; consider the peace which reigns there amongst the blessed, and tenderly beg of God to grant thee grace ever to maintain the like with thy brethren.

THIRTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON SPIRITUAL JOY AND CONSOLATION.

First Point.—Consider the sadness felt by the apostles in the Cenacle because of the absence of Christ our Lord, and the fear they were in of the Jews, and how at His visitation those clouds of sorrow were dispersed and their hearts were encouraged by the light and joy which the Redeemer communicated to them. Whence thou shouldst draw a lively apprehension of the interior joy of the soul and its source, which is the presence and friendship of God, as David testifies¹ when he says, “My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God;” not, as St. Austin remarks, in the riches and delights of the age, which are the lifeless idols of this world; but in the true and living God, in whom exist and from whom proceed the true joy and interior consolation of the Spirit. Resolve to seek God, to possess God, to unite thyself with God, and to despise the world, and thou wilt find the true joy of the soul.

Second Point.—Consider that joy is one of the fruits of the Holy Ghost, Who communicates it, according to His good pleasure, to those who merit it by worthy service. Lay open thy heart, and cry aloud with tears to the Divine Spirit, begging of Him to grant it to thee. Place thy hand on thy breast, and see whether there be in thee

¹ Psalm lxxxiii.

anything that impedes His action, and endeavour to remove all blemishes or thorns of faults and imperfections which oppose the action of the Divine Spirit in thy soul.

Third Point.—Consider that this spiritual joy, which encourages to virtue and produces devotion in the soul, is born of a good conscience, and is the effect of a holy and perfect life, according to the words of David,¹ “Much peace have they that love Thy law,” and to those of St. Paul,² “Glory and honour and peace to every one that worketh good ;” and of them that do evil, he adds, “tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that worketh evil ;” in accordance with which St. Bernard says,³ “If thou wouldst not be sad, lead a good life, for a good conscience is ever joyous.” Ponder all that has been said, and resolve to please God in all thy works, and to seek this spiritual joy by a good and holy life.

Fourth Point.—Consider what should be the subject of this spiritual joy, and how, to be perfect, it should be founded not so much on our interest as on the glory and honour of God ; and thus we should rejoice and be glad in our hearts because of the greatness of God’s goodness, because of all His perfections and attributes, of His infinite wisdom, power, providence, immensity, liberality, &c. We should exult at His being known, exalted, adored, and served by all His creatures. We should rejoice at all the gifts and graces that God has communicated, and can communicate to men and angels ; at those that He bestows on the blessed in heaven, as well as on such as yet combat in this world ; at all the things ordered by God according to His good pleasure, and that His will should be done in all things, and be praised and glorified by all on earth as it is in heaven. This is the highest act of charity towards God, to rejoice at His glory because He is Who He is. Study with all diligence to learn it and to practise it frequently, and God will teach thee, and will inundate thy soul with the

¹ Psalm cxviii. 165.

² Rom. ii.

³ Bernard de Int. Dom., c. 45.

joy of the Holy Ghost, and the divine unction of His grace to serve Him with devotion and perfection. But it is not therefore forbidden to rejoice and be glad at the hope of heaven, and because of the favours we receive from the hand of God ; for Christ told His disciples to rejoice that their names were written in the book of life and in the archives of heaven.

THIRTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE PEACE AND SPIRITUAL JOY EXPERIENCED BY OUR
BLESSED LADY.

First Point.—Consider what interior peace the most Blessed Virgin ever enjoyed, how intimately her will was united with that of God, without the least desire contrary to His. She was exalted above all earthly things, as though she lived not in this world, and her heart was so set on eternal ones, that it seemed as though she lived rather in heaven than on earth. Praise the Lord with this Heavenly Queen for the great things that He wrought in her, and beg of her to obtain for thee some degree of that same peace and grace of which she enjoyed so large a measure.

Second Point.—Consider the peace she always preserved with those around her, never breaking or lessening the bond of fraternal charity, but ever bearing with her neighbour with most perfect love, and returning good for evil ; and, as St. Jerome tells us, spreading peace amongst all with most perfect charity. Contemplate the peace of this celestial Virgin, and learn from her example to be an angel of peace to thy brethren.

Third Point.—Consider the interior joy of her soul, enlightened by heavenly communications and instructed by divine inspirations on the essence of God and His in-

finite perfections ; consider the light she had with regard to the worship and reverence rendered to God by all creatures, especially by the angels and perfect men, concerning the mercies which He does them in communicating to them His graces and gifts, and especially with regard to those which the Holy Virgin had herself received from Him, and to which she herself bears witness, saying,¹ “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour, . . . because He that is mighty hath done great things in me.” Contemplate that ocean of joy and delight which inundated her soul ; rejoice with her joy, and beg of her to make thee participate in the devotion wherewith she served the Lord.

Fourth Point.—Contemplate the joy she experienced at the glory of her most Holy Son and at that attained by the saints, and especially by St. Joseph, her most worthy spouse, St. John the Baptist, and others whom she knew and loved so well on earth. Consider the favours that God bestowed on men for her sake, especially on those for whom the Holy Virgin herself interceded, and what thanksgivings she rendered to God for them. Beg of her to remember thee, to speak to God in thy favour, and to obtain for thee grace to despise what is earthly, to appreciate what is heavenly, and to love God most perfectly, seeking in all things His greater honour and glory, as the Blessed Virgin did herself.

THIRTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the fifth Sunday after Easter.

ON THE GOSPEL—(JOHN XVI.)

In this Gospel Christ exhorts His disciples to pray to the Eternal Father, and to pray in His name, assuring them that they shall not ask in vain, &c.

¹ Luke i.

First Point.—Consider the liberality and the mercy of God towards men, Who is so desirous of conferring favours on us that He exhorts and persuades us to solicit them, with the antecedent will to grant us what we ask for. Ponder how men are offended at being besought, and God considers it a sort of offence not to be solicited, and He awaits us with His hands full of gifts to bestow them on us. Blessed be so good a God, so liberal and merciful. Learn thou also to be generous towards thy neighbour, and acquire great confidence in the divine bounty, that thou wilt obtain what thou dost ask for.

Second Point.—Consider that God is very well aware of our needs and knows the desires of our heart; and although His love for us is infinite, He sends not His gifts, but waits that we should pray and ask them of Him, because He has determined to bestow them as the price of prayer. Ponder how many mercies from His liberal Hand are lost to thee because thou dost not pray and beseech Him for them, and how many He has prepared for thee and for His Church, waiting for thee to solicit them. Render many thanks to Him for this, and resolve to pray incessantly, and to beg favours of Him for thyself and for His Church, and not to lose them for lack of prayer.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ tells His disciples that until then they had asked for nothing in His name; which St. Austin says is to be understood of spiritual goods, because to ask for temporal and earthly goods that are not directed to the service of God is to ask for nothing. Wherein thou shouldst perceive what it is that thou shouldst ask of God if thou wouldst obtain the fulfilment of thy petitions, namely, for spiritual things, and for such as are conducive to the service of God; for all the rest are as nought, and are esteemed such in the sight of God, and thou also shouldst despise them.

Fourth Point.—Enter now into account with thyself, and search with the light of grace into the secrets of thy soul; examine leisurely what needs thou hast and what things are lacking to thee. Review the powers of thy

soul, and see how many wants thou hast contracted by sin, by lack of virtue, superabundance of self-love, and unrestrained appetites; and since God lays open to thee the treasures of His grace, and invites thee to solicit Him, be not behindhand in asking whatsoever thou dost need and desire for thy salvation and for His glory.

THIRTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE GOSPEL FOR THE DAY—(LUKE II.)

Christ in this Gospel exhorts us to persevere in prayer by the example of a man who solicits a loan from a friend, and although the hour is unseasonable, obtains what he asks, because of his importunity and perseverance; and also by the example of the son who asks his father for necessary food, and because of the love he bears him the father cannot refuse. And our Lord adds, "Still less will God refuse His good Spirit to them that ask it of Him with filial affection."

First Point.—Consider the bounty and mercy of God, who, at all hours and in all times and places, has the door open to prayer, awaiting and hearkening to whomsoever desires to speak to Him or to beseech Him, and giving audience to our petitions in His own person without the intervention of officials or ministers. Rejoice to have such a Lord and so good a God, and give Him thanks for this favour, and for having rendered so easy a matter so important and necessary. Abandon the great ones of the earth and apply to heaven with thy petitions, and thou wilt obtain the accomplishment of thy desires.

Second Point.—Consider what Christ says in the Gospel of that friend who refused at first what was asked of him, and because of the importunity of him who persevered in asking, yielded and gave it to him;

wherein Christ teaches us that sometimes God delays to grant what is asked for and treats us with severity, in order to prove our faith and perseverance, and if these are not wanting, He grants what we ask of Him. Derive hence a firm resolve to persevere in prayer, even though God should use thee harshly, though He deny thee what thou dost solicit and thou seest contrary effects ; because perseverance obtains the favours of the Lord, and if thou givest way before labour and dost lose courage, thou wilt not obtain what thou seekest. Hope in the Lord and do good and thou wilt experience His mercy.

Third Point.—Consider the words of Christ in this Gospel, namely, “Ask, and it shall be given you : seek, and you shall find : knock, and it shall be opened to you.” In which He teaches us to ask with the voice, to seek with diligence, and to solicit with our hands ; because prayer is not to be of the lips alone, but accompanied with diligence, with fervour, and good works of penance and mercy, as, according to St. Bonaventure,¹ our Lady taught St. Elizabeth. Take this lesson to thyself, and consider whether thy prayer be so accompanied, or whether thy petitions are made with the lips only, and not with the heart and with fervour and good works. See how much thou dost lose by thy tepidity, and beg of God His grace to become more fervent, and to associate thy prayers with fasting, mortification, and good works.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ says that no son asking his father for bread would receive from him instead a stone, or a serpent, or a scorpion, but only what is good and suitable for his welfare, and that “much more will your Father from heaven give the good Spirit to them that ask Him.” Wherein thou shouldst ponder two things : first, the love that God bears us as a Father, and how He desires that we should pray to Him with the affection of children ; secondly, that as a father never gives his child what he knows to be injurious to him, but always that which is good and profitable, so,

¹ S. Bonaven. Medit. 3 de Vita Christi.

in like manner, God gives not to His children the things they ask for when these are not conducive to their welfare, but only those that are useful and profitable to them, and His good and Holy Spirit to direct them on the road to heaven. Whence thou shouldst derive great confidence in the love that God bears towards thee, and a humble indifference in what thou dost solicit, leaving it entirely in His hands, beseeching Him to amend thy petitions, and to give thee whatever may be for His greater glory, accepting with equal serenity and gratitude the rejection or acceptance of thy petition, adverse as well as prosperous things, sickness as well as health, fully persuaded that they are gifts from the hand of the Lord. And, as St. Bernard says, desist not from thy prayer, because God will grant thee what thou askest, or He will give thee something better in its place, as was the case with St. Paul, who did not obtain from God to be delivered from the temptation of the flesh which he suffered although he solicited it with instance, but the Lord gave him something better instead, which was the grace to conquer the temptation and to merit thereby a reward.

THIRTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON PRAYER—(JOHN XVI.)

First Point.—Consider the power and efficacy of prayer with God, since Christ has given us His word that the Eternal Father will grant us whatsoever we ask therein. Prayer appeases the wrath of God and opens heaven; it inclines His will, and obtains spiritual and temporal goods, tears and contrition for sin, the grace and friendship of God, and the inheritance of heaven and whatsoever we can desire. Wherefore the Redeemer tells us to pray and solicit, that our joy may be perfect; for

prayer fills the soul with joy, and through it we obtain the fulfilment of our desires. Oh, celestial virtue! oh, grace that obtains grace and the inheritance of glory! oh, key that openest the gate of heaven and the treasury of God! Grant me, Lord, this grace wherewith to obtain all graces, and a firm resolution never to fail in prayer for the sake of any earthly interest, but rather to persevere therein all my life, so as to continue therein in the next throughout eternity. Amen.

Second Point.—Ponder those words of the Saviour: "Amen, amen. I say to you, If you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it to you." Consider the value of the name of Christ, and how powerful and weighty it is with God, on account of the great merits of His Blood. Beg of God by these merits and in His name all that thou needest, for His merits are infinite, and however much thou dost ask for, His merits are greater still.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ tells us to pray; because He will pray to the Father in union with us, and His prayer will accompany ours, assisting and furthering our petitions to God. Having such a Patron and Advocate, be very firmly confident that thou wilt obtain what thou dost ask. Entreat Him always to accompany thee when thou interest on prayer, and beg Him to keep His word by praying with thee and for thee to the Father. Beseech Him to offer thy prayers, and to supply with His merits what is lacking to thine, and have confidence in His bounty, that if thou dost this with fervour, thou wilt experience His aid and thy prayer will be effectual.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ tells us that the man who sought his friend at midnight obtained what he asked for. St. Peter Chrysologus assures us that this was because there is no better time for negotiating with God; first, on account of the silence and quiet of that hour, then because of the secret and obscurity of the night, and again on account of the mortification of breaking sleep and abandoning the repose of the body, which men commonly

take at that season, in order to devote it to prayer and communication with God, Who is well pleased with those who praise and bless Him at a time when others forget Him in the sleep of night. Derive hence a resolution to pray at that hour, and to exert thyself in serving and loving God when others forget Him, and of breaking thy sleep and the repose of the body in order to seek that of the soul, which is to be found in prayer and commune with God.

THIRTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday—Vigil of the Ascension.

ON THE GOSPEL—(JOHN XVII.)

The Gospel tells us how Christ, being with His disciples on the night of His Passion, and about to pass out of this world to His Father, lifted up His eyes to heaven and besought Him to glorify His Son, as the hour was come for Him to be glorified, for He had finished the work given Him to do, &c.

First Point.—Consider that, as St. Austin says, Christ might have prayed to His Father on this occasion interiorly in His soul, and He chose rather to pray exteriorly, at the same time raising His eyes and voice to heaven, in order to teach His disciples, and through them all men, how to pray to God with both soul and body, and to ask favours of Him, acknowledging that all good things come to us from His hand. Whence do thou learn to have constant recourse to God in all things, praying and entreating the Divine Majesty, from whom all good proceeds, and, after the example of Christ our Lord, praying not with the soul only, but likewise with the body, with extreme reverence and devotion.

Second Point.—Meditate the words with which Christ commences His prayer: "Father, the hour is come."

Ponder how there is no hour that does not come at length, nor term that is not reached. Christ came into the world, pursued His course, and soon reached the end; thine hour will likewise come, the end of thy life, the term of thy labours, and the time of receiving their reward, and it will come sooner than thou thinkest. Consider and note what thou wilt then feel, examine how thou hast spent thy days, and how thou wilt then wish to have spent them. Christ spent His in glorifying His Father, and thou perchance dost spend thine in offending Him. Weep over thy sins, and beg of God grace to employ thyself wholly in His service and in heaping up immortal riches, in order to have some security in that critical moment.

Third Point.—Consider that Christ did not ask to be glorified so much for Himself as in order to glorify the Father. Wherein He teaches us to seek in all things, even in striving for beatitude, rather the glory of God and His honour than our own. Aspire to this perfection in imitation of Christ; direct all thy actions to the honour and glory of God, begging and praying that He may be praised in all things.

Fourth Point.—Consider the claim that Christ asserts when asking His Father to glorify Him, namely, that He has finished the work He had given Him to do, which was to glorify Him on earth by manifesting His name to the world, and drawing men to His knowledge and service. Whence thou shouldst draw, first, that if thou wouldst attain to heavenly glory, thou must accomplish to the end the work that God has committed to thee. Weary not and faint not on the way, for to them that persevere is the crown promised. Suffer with Christ and for Christ if thou wouldst reign with Christ. Secondly, that God glorifies in heaven those who honour Him on earth; and thirdly, that God is honoured and glorified by the conversion of sinners; wherefore thou shouldst be encouraged to seek the profit brethren, and to draw them to the knowledge of

God, glorifying Him in them, if thou wouldst be glorified by His Divine Majesty in heaven.

FORTIETH MEDITATION.

For Ascension Day.

ON THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST OUR LORD INTO HEAVEN.

First Point.—Consider that as the stone is attracted to its centre, so in like manner did Christ ever long to ascend to His Father, and He only remained on earth in order to glorify Him, and to convert men and draw them to His service. At last the time came when His desires, increased by delay, having reached their utmost intensity, He ascended into heaven to enjoy the glory He had merited. Whence thou shouldst learn to postpone thy convenience and to limit thy consolations, even spiritual ones, when needful, for the service of God and for the good of thy neighbour, and to trust in the bounty of the Most High, that since He has given thee the desire, He will likewise fulfil it when it shall be for His service and for thy good, as He fulfilled that of Christ. Excite thyself with His example to love God and to desire His glory. Fix thy whole mind on eternal things, confiding in the Divine Pity that thy desires will shortly be accomplished.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ appeared to His apostles and all His disciples, and commanded them to go to Mount Olivet, which, as St. Bonaventure says, is a mile distant from Jerusalem. There He appeared to them again, and took leave of them with most tender words, beginning with His most Holy Mother, whom He tenderly embraced, and then taking leave of the disciples and of the holy women who had accompanied and served Him in the course of His life, all of whom, as the seraphic doctor says, prostrated themselves at His feet and

kissed His wounds with intense reverence and tenderness, shedding many tears of pure devotion. Whilst they were yet prostrate, Christ raised His hands, and, as the Evangelist St. Luke says, gave them His blessing after the manner of a Father about to leave this world. Be present in spirit at this scene, and enter by meditation into the heart of the Saviour. Contemplate the struggle that took place therein between His love for His Father and that towards His disciples ; the latter retaining Him on earth, the former urging Him to heaven. Ponder how at last He found means to remain and to depart ; remaining with them in the Blessed Sacrament and going to His Father to prepare heaven for them, according to what St. Gregory tells us, viz., that in that hour He eat with them and communicated them as at the Last Supper, in order to show them that He remained in their society. Observe likewise the love that the disciples manifested towards their Master, and the tenderness and grief that filled their hearts ; how they longed to accompany Him, and how Christ consoled them, promising them the Holy Spirit in a few days thence. Raise thy heart to the Lord, and entreat Him not to leave thee orphan, but to give thee His blessing as His disciple. Bewail, lament, pray, entreat, and beseech thy Father to console thee His son at His departure.

Third Point.—Consider how then were heard on that mountain the choirs of angels singing sweetly, and a celestial fragrance pervaded the air, whilst Christ with all that blessed company of the holy patriarchs slowly and triumphantly ascended, more resplendent than the sun, illuminating the heavens and the earth, in the sight of the most Blessed Virgin and of all the Church there assembled, whose hearts were bathed in joy at beholding their most glorious Redeemer ascend in triumph to heaven, and, enflamed with longing desires to accompany Him on the road, they united their praises with the canticles of the angels, their rejoicings with those of the glorious saints who accompanied Him. And whilst

participating in the bliss of this vision, they felt themselves urged to labour in the service of God and for the increase of His Church, by beholding the reward that He has prepared for them that serve Him faithfully. Come, O my soul, to this mountain, be present at this triumph, and rejoice at the glory of thy Saviour; give Him a thousand praises with His disciples; unite thy voice to theirs, and thy petitions to their supplications. Contemplate the reward that God bestows on those who serve Him worthily, and excite thyself to serve Him in order to merit a share in this triumph.

Fourth Point.—Consider how a cloud received the Redeemer when He ascended to heaven, removing Him from the sight of His disciples, and two angels clothed in white came and told them how that Lord Who had thus ascended to heaven would come again with like majesty to judge the world; in which thou hast much to learn. First, that God is not well pleased that we should give ourselves unreservedly to the contemplation of Him, but always within the limits of prudence and of a well-regulated mind; secondly, that the Lord desires that even in the midst of the greatest feasts and rejoicings we should not be forgetful of His judgments or of the rigour of His justice, but that they should be ever present to our minds, in order that whilst His mercy and the remembrance of His rewards stimulate our love, the recollection of His justice and chastisements should awaken that fear which shall restrain us from vice. Observe that the angels say not when He will come, because no day is safe, nor does He will us to have any security. Compare the life of Christ with His coming, and see what it becomes thee to do now for thy good and thy salvation, in view of His coming to judge thee hereafter as a just and avenging Judge.

*FORTY-FIRST MEDITATION.**For the Friday.*

ON THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY OF CHRIST INTO HEAVEN.

First Point.—Contemplate all the celestial court coming forth clothed in robes of glory to receive Christ with hymns and heavenly canticles, singing to Him that which St. John¹ tells us in his Apocalypse he had heard them sing: “The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and strength, and honour, and glory, and benediction.” And then all taking the crowns from their heads, would cast them at His feet, as St. John saw the ancients do. And if here on earth there is no one who does not share in the common joy on like occasions, how much more must not all the heavenly courtiers have participated in the joy of that day, all of whom from their thrones of glory revered the Redeemer, and received fresh increase of glory from His glory, and offered Him their praises and congratulations at beholding the restoration of the empty thrones in their midst, and men ascending to people the heavenly court. Contemplate all that occurred, and rejoice at the glory of thy Redeemer, congratulating Him in union with the whole heavenly city.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ our Lord, kneeling down before the Eternal Father, presented to Him that army of souls which He brought with Him as the spoils of His victory, and gave Him infinite thanks for the graces and favours He had bestowed on Him, and the Eternal Father crowned Him with the laurels of a conqueror and seated him on his right hand, making Him Judge of the living and the dead, and universal Advocate of all the human race. And then all the courtiers of heaven approached to acknowledge and

¹ Apoc. v. 12.

worship Him as their King and Lord. Approach thou also with them ; rejoice to have such a Prince, such a Lord, and such a Mediator with the Most High. Rejoice to see thy Brother in the flesh so powerful with God, and derive thence great confidence of obtaining what thou dost solicit from the Lord by means of His intercession.

Third Point.—Consider how He at once began to exercise His office, and to distribute the thrones of heaven amongst those whom He had brought with Him, giving to each one a place according to his merits. Behold that which He bestowed on St. Joseph, placing him near to Himself, amongst the seraphim of heaven, and that which He conferred on St. John the Baptist and the holy prophets, especially on Abraham and Moses, &c. Ponder the joy of these saints at finding themselves freed from the captivity in which they had lingered, which joy was increased by the comparison of the lowliness of limbo with the glory of heaven ; what thanksgivings they offered to Christ for the mercy they had received at His hand ; how they forgot their past labours, and considered them well spent in procuring the delight of their present glory. Ruminates on this sweet doctrine, and draw thence great profit of devotion, strength, confidence, and energy to endure many labours here for God, in order to merit to reign eternally with Him.

Fourth Point.—Above all, lay stress on the consideration of the glory that Christ received and enjoys in His soul as well as in His body, and on the throne on which He is seated amidst the seraphim and angelic spirits, whose throne in this world was a cross between thieves and malefactors. Compare the one with the other ; contemplate the difference that exists between the two ; how the cross is exchanged for glory ; how short a time the one lasts, and how eternal is the other, and derive thence courage to bear thy cross with Christ, in order to deserve to reign hereafter with Him. See how He at once fulfils His office of Advocate for mankind, by beseeching the

Eternal Father not to leave us orphans, but to send the Holy Spirit the Comforter, and by imploring the Holy Spirit Himself to deign to descend to console and strengthen men. Oh, immense charity of the Redeemer! Who, not content with giving His blood and life for me, in the midst of His highest glory interests Himself about my needs and is solicitous for my welfare. A thousand thanks I render Thee, O Lord, for so signal a mercy, and I entreat Thee that as Thou takest on Thyself the office of my Advocate, Thou wilt obtain for me the pardon of my sins, and a spark of the fire of the Holy Ghost which may purify my soul and render me worthy to serve Thee eternally. Amen.

FORTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE SINGULAR JOY EXPERIENCED BY THE BLESSED VIRGIN AT THE TRIUMPH AND GLORIFICATION OF HER MOST HOLY SON.

First Point.—Consider that although all the disciples experienced great joy at the ascension and triumph of Christ our Lord, yet was that of the most Blessed Virgin greater than any beyond all comparison, first, because as His Mother, she loved Him more than all and was loved by Him; secondly, because she apprehended more clearly the greatness of His glory; and, thirdly, because in proportion as her grief at His Passion was greater, so also was her joy at His glorification more intense. For all these reasons was the glory of the Mother increased above that of the rest by the glory of her Son. Penetrate by contemplation into her innermost soul, and behold it bathed with ineffable delight and intense joy at His felicity, and rejoice with her in her joy, and thank God most lovingly for it.

Second Point.—Consider the joy which our Lady experienced on this day at beholding the glory of the saints, and especially that of her most holy spouse St. Joseph, of St. John the Baptist, and of the holy Fathers with whom she had associated in this world. Ponder how she would congratulate them on their felicity, and they her on the glory of her most Holy Son, saluting each other with reciprocal love. Behold how steadfast in her heart was the hope of promptly reaching the glory she witnessed in the saints, conformably with the testimony of her conscience, and the promise thereof which she had received from her Son. With all these causes for joy her delight and desires were greatly increased, although she conformed herself fully and in all things with the will of the Most High. Whence thou shouldst derive affections of joy and congratulation at her glory, and at that of thy brethren and of all the saints, and of hope of attaining through the merits of Christ to the same glory that they reached.

Third Point.—Consider how, by a singular privilege, the Queen of Heaven was present in spirit at the triumph of her Son in heaven, and at His coronation by the hand of the Eternal Father; how she beheld the throne on which He was placed, and the prerogatives and offices that were conferred upon Him. And if here below a mother is intimately rejoiced by the advancement of her son, and the mother of Nero so desired to see him emperor that she offered her life to secure him the crown, what must not have been the contentment experienced by the Blessed Virgin at seeing her most Holy Son Emperor of heaven and earth, crowned in glory on so exalted a throne, and constituted supreme Judge of all the human race? O most Holy Virgin! all this and much more has thy most precious Son merited. I offer thee a thousand congratulations for His glory, and I am more rejoiced at it than if it were my own. Soon wilt thou find thyself at His side crowned with thy merits; meanwhile pray for this unworthy servant of thine, and

obtain for me grace to direct my steps in the path of His holy service.

Fourth Point.—Consider the frequent visits that Christ must have paid His Holy Mother during those days, what sweet intercourse they had with each other, what heavenly illuminations and favours she received from God ; and rejoicing thereat, beseech her for grace to merit to receive worthily the visits of the Lord. Entreat her not to forget thee, and to intercede with her most precious Son for the necessities of the Church, and for thy needs in particular. For if on occasion of the triumphs of earthly kings favours are conferred on all, how much greater will not be those bestowed on occasion of the triumph of the Eternal King and Emperor of heaven. Be not slow to ask and God will not be slow to give.

FORTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

For the sixth Sunday after Easter.

(Within the Octave of Ascension.)

ON THE GOSPEL—(JOHN XV.)

Christ tells His disciples in this Gospel how, when the Paraclete, Whom the Father will send, shall come, He will give testimony of Christ, and they also are to give testimony of Him by the many labours and persecutions they will undergo for His love, of which He warns them, that they may not be taken unawares, but may remember that He had foretold it to them.

First Point.—Consider the certainty with which Christ speaks of the coming of the Holy Ghost, which He had promised His disciples, knowing that He would come very shortly and would give testimony of Him, in order that thou shouldst know that the word of God is not false and deceitful like that of men, but that His promises

are infallible and certain, and will all be punctually fulfilled. Whence thou shouldst derive great faith in His word, and most steadfast confidence in His promises, knowing that they will all be faithfully accomplished. If he delays, be not distrustful, but excite thy hope; for without doubt He will come and keep His word and fulfil thy desires.

Second Point.—Consider that He does not say that He will Himself alone send the Holy Ghost, but that He will be sent from the Father, in order not to attribute the glory of this action to Himself alone, but rather to the Eternal Father, in order that they might give Him thanks for it, acknowledging this benefit to come from the hands of both. Place thy hand on thy breast and see how different is thy conduct, attributing to thyself not alone the works of thy hands, but oftentimes the works of others, and causing the glory thereof to be given to thee. Consider how in truth of thyself thou hast neither power nor strength to do a single good work, but that all proceed from the grace of God; and since this is so, humble thyself in His presence, learn the humility of Christ, and attribute nothing good to thyself, but to the grace of the Lord, to Whom the honour and glory of all are due.

Third Point.—Christ says that the Holy Ghost will give testimony of Him, and that the apostles will give witness likewise, in order, as St. Austin says, that we should know that the witness of the Holy Ghost and of the apostles is one and the same without any difference, because the Holy Ghost speaks by their mouth. O Lord! would that I were fully convinced of this truth, that the words addressed to me by Thy ministers, who are successors of the apostles, are the words of the Holy Ghost; that it is He who exhorts, admonishes, counsels, and reproves me by their mouth. Would that I hearkened to them and accepted them as such! Grant me this grace that I may hearken to all superiors, preachers, confessors, and elders as to Thy ministers, and as to the

voice of the Holy Ghost, so as to perform and execute as His commands what they enjoy and advise.

Fourth Point.—Consider the manner in which Christ tells His disciples that they will have to bear witness to Him, which is to be not by words alone, but much more by deeds, enduring many and great trials for His love with invincible patience. This is the touchstone which reveals the true and faithful follower of the Lord, and whereby the power of the Crucified is made known to men, and shines forth in His chosen ones by grace. For this purpose He exposes them to the blows of adversity in order that the purity of the fire of charity which is enclosed within their breasts may be made manifest, and that all may recognise in their patience and constancy that of their Master and Captain, and may believe in Him and become disciples in His school. Place thy hand on thy breast and examine whether thy life bears witness to Christ, and whether infidels can recognise thereby His sanctity and believe in Him. See how He has sent thee to give testimony of Him, and to preach by thy works His patience and humility, His constancy and charity, and all His other virtues. See whether thou dost edify or scandalise the world by thy deeds, and remember that account will be required from thee of thy witness. O Lord! how blind and mistaken have I lived till now! I acknowledge that I have been deceived, and that I have not fulfilled my duty. I beseech Thee to pardon the past, and to give me one spark of the fire of thy Spirit, in order that henceforth I may so live as to give testimony of Thee to the world.

*FORTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.**For the Monday.*

ON THE PERSECUTIONS THAT GOD SENDS TO HIS ELECT.

First Point.—Consider that, as St. John Chrysostom says, Christ prophesied to His own the persecutions that they would have to suffer, because He knew and was aware of them, and He could have prevented and spared them, for it was in His power so to do, but He did not do so because it so behoved for their good. Whence thou shouldst learn that no sort of trial whatsoever assails thee without the knowledge of God, Who could prevent it and spare thee, and that He does not do so out of regard for thy good, and because it is suitable to His glory and to the profit of thy soul. Therefore thou shouldst accept everything as coming from His hand, and give Him many thanks for all, and bear all patiently and joyfully for His love. Meditate and penetrate into the depths of this truth, and offer thyself to the Lord in order to suffer and endure whatsoever it may be His will to send thee, and thou wilt find great comfort in thy trials, and strength wherewith to support them.

Second Point.—Consider with St. Austin what Christ says to His disciples: "They will put you out of the synagogues;" whence, as the saint says, they themselves were to fly, as from schools condemned by Christ and calculated to lead them to perdition. Wherein thou wilt perceive the effect of persecutions on the good, namely, to withdraw them from occasions of evil and to purify them from all dross, as gold and silver are purified by fire, and for this reason does God send them. Ponder how many have been crowned with glory through persecutions who would not have been so without them, and how many have been condemned through want of them, and because they lived amidst honours, riches, and abundance. The earth is ploughed with iron and the just are

fashioned by persecution ; remember this, and offer thyself with manly courage to the Lord to suffer for Him such persecutions and trials as may please Him, recognising them to be for the purification of thy soul and to preserve it from all corruption.

Third Point.—Consider, as the same St. Chrysostom says, that Christ warned His apostles that they would be persecuted for His sake and through ignorance, because He would not be acknowledged, in order that, convinced that they were suffering for Him and for the exaltation of His name, they might find joy and consolation in their tribulations, remembering that they were suffering for their Master's sake, Who made them worthy to endure something for Him in return for what He Himself had endured for them. Oh, that thou wouldst meditate on this with devotion and attention, and that thou couldst comprehend how glorious it is to suffer for Christ and for the exaltation of His name ! Raise thy heart to God, and entreat this grace of Him that thou mayst be worthy to suffer something for His love. Remember how persistently God succours and strengthens those that suffer for Him, and what a crown awaits them, and then thou wilt solicit earnestly and from thy heart this grace from His Divine Majesty.

FORTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

HOW GOD ARMS HIS ELECT FOR TRIALS.

First Point.—Consider how Christ warns His disciples so long before of the persecutions that they will have to suffer for Him, in order that they may prepare themselves by prayer, meditation, fasting, and penance, and may not be taken unprepared, and be scandalised and fall into impatience and sin. Learn this lesson, and take

the words of Christ as addressed to thee, since thou art His disciple, and prepare thyself forthwith for tribulations by the meditation of what He endured for thee, and of the patience He manifested in all persecutions and trials. Arm thyself with these considerations, as St. Peter advises, in order that thou mayst not fall under temptation.

Second Point.—Consider that, as St. Gregory says, Christ warns them before the trials come, because they cause less sorrow when foreseen and expected. When a dart is cast at us unawares and unseen it is hard to avoid, but if we see it coming, and know that it is to be directed against us, we may resist it. Ponder deliberately before God how many arrows threaten thee, whether as regards this life or the next, whether they attack thy body or thy soul, coming now from men and now from the devils. Lay stress on the consideration of the next life, on the accusations that will then be brought against thee before the tribunal of Christ, on eternal torments, and on the danger of falling into them. Remember that the Saviour has warned thee of them all, and prepare thyself for the future. See how thou shouldst arm and protect thyself against so many enemies that surround thee, and that those of the body are fewer and weaker, whilst those of the soul are the most numerous and the most terrible. Prostrate thyself before God ; implore His assistance and grace to prepare thyself forthwith as He advises in His Gospel, for thou knowest not at what hour He will come.

Third Point.—Consider and meditate those words of Christ, “The hour cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth service to God.” Ponder how He calls all their tribulations, which were so numerous, “an hour” because of their brevity, for all is soon over, and for one hour of suffering here, He will give an eternity of enjoyment hereafter in bliss. Oh, happy hour and well spent in which the servants of the Lord achieve so great a gain ! Raise thine eyes to heaven and contemplate the glory of the martyrs and the saints. Behold the rewards

they enjoy, and will enjoy eternally, for one hour of suffering in this life, and take courage from their example to suffer for Christ in order to enjoy Him eternally in heaven.

Fourth Point.—Consider the ignorance of men, of which Christ tells us, who mistake evil for good, and offences against God for defects in Him, and persecute Him, thinking to serve Him, because they are blind and know not the Lord nor His Son Christ Jesus. Cast thine eyes over the world, and see how many there are that are blind, and how few who really know God ; weep over their blindness, and beg of God to give them light to know Him, to issue forth from the darkness in which they live, to cease to persecute those that serve Him, and henceforth rather to assist and favour them, in order that God may be glorified in all.

FORTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE LAST APPARITION OF CHRIST TO HIS DISCIPLES ON THE DAY OF HIS GLORIOUS ASCENSION—(MARK XVI.)

First Point.—Consider how the apostles being unprepared, and whilst they were lying down to rest and eat, Christ appeared to them and placed Himself in their midst, like a vigilant shepherd watching over his flock. Whence thou shouldst draw two lessons: First, of the care thou shouldst bestow on those committed to thee by God, sparing no anxiety or labour for the welfare of those under thy charge, ever bearing in mind the account thou wilt have to give of them to God. Secondly, to be thyself ever on the watch, for thou knowest not at what hour the Lord will come, for, as He Himself says,¹ He

¹ Luke xii.

will come at the hour we think not, and when least expected, as a thief does, and that therefore we should be always ready, on the watch, and awaiting His coming, lest He find us unprepared and we be deprived of His grace.

Second Point.—Consider how sternly Christ reprov'd His disciples because they were so slow to believe and to be convinced of His Resurrection, because God reproves and chastises those whom He loves, fashioning them for heaven with the hammer and the fire of reproof. If thou be a superior, learn courageously to admonish thy subjects of their faults, in order that they may progress towards heaven, and not to leave them in their errors through the cowardice of not enlightening and purifying them. If thou be a subject, ponder the patience with which the disciples bore the reproof of their Master, and see what should be thine when reprov'd by thy superiors for the welfare of thy soul. See what dross of many faults attaches to thee, how displeasing to God they render thee, and how important it is to purify thy soul ; implore the Lord to cleanse thee by means of reproof, and when it is administered to thee, accept it with gratitude, as a gift from the hand of the Lord.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ, having reprimanded His disciples, closed the subject, and forthwith made them preachers of His Gospel to the world, commanding them to go and carry His doctrine to the furthest ends thereof. Wherein He teaches us, as good shepherds, to feed as well as to correct, to use gentleness as well as severity, to reward as well as to punish. Learn this lesson, and implore prudence of the Lord in order to know how to govern, and to use both these means towards others, restraining the over-daring with the rigour of the curb, and encouraging the timid with assistance and rewards.

Fourth Point.—Take to thyself those words of Christ, "Go ye into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature." Consider the ardent desire which consumed Christ for the salvation of the world, and spare

no labour for the welfare of thy neighbour. Travel through the world soliciting the conversion of all, and if thou canst not do this in the body, do it in spirit, imploring God with tears to send labourers of great sanctity to convert sinners, and to bestow His Spirit on those who are engaged in His vineyard, in order that they may fulfil His precept and draw the whole world to the knowledge of Him.

FORTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday—Octave of the Ascension.

ON THE MYSTERY OF THE DAY.

First Point.—Consider the joy that the apostles experienced when Christ appeared to them coming to bid them farewell, which was proportionate with the desire they had of seeing and communicating with Him. Entreat the Lord not to depart without visiting thee and consoling thee, as He did His holy disciples; implore Him not to regard thy sins, but to comfort and strengthen thee, and to give thee His holy benediction.

Second Point.—Consider how He appeared to them whilst at table; because God fixes no time for His consolations, and often bestows them when not at prayer, in answer to petitions made during prayer, in order that His elect may not be vainglorious, conceiving that by their efforts they have elicited the waters of consolation. Weep, lament, and entreat the Lord, confiding in Him Who is ever faithful to His own, and when thou dost least expect it thou wilt experience the fruit of thy prayer, and He will visit and console thee when not engaged in prayer, as He did His holy disciples.

Third Point.—Consider that, as St. Gregory observes, Christ sat down to eat with His disciples, and that He consecrated bread and distributed it to them, and eat

thereof Himself, and then ascended into heaven, in order that we should recognise the power of this Divine Food, which, if we receive it worthily, raises up the soul with Christ to heaven. O Lord, grant me once to prepare myself to receive Thee as I ought; prepare me Thyself to receive Thee, and let this holy fire enflame and elevate my soul so that I may love Thee, desire Thee, and serve Thee eternally as I ought.

Fourth Point.—Contemplate how Christ conducted His disciples to the mountain of Olives, which is symbolical of peace, because peace is one of the means of ascending to heaven. Behold how He took leave of them with tender words and affectionate embraces, and how He gave them His blessing. Ponder the sentiments of their hearts, how they all longed to go with Him, and how He ascended gradually, detained by the love of those whom He was leaving behind in the world. Behold how a cloud gathered around Him and hid Him from His disciples, whose hearts could not fail to be grieved at losing sight of Him, even though it was through no fault of theirs. See that thou lose not sight of Him through thy fault; consider what a cloud of sins thou hast interposed between God and thy soul, and that thereby thou dost lose His vision and His favours. Entreat grace of the Lord to amend, and that thy sins may not occasion thy banishment from His kingdom and the eternal loss of the vision of God.

FORTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

HOW THE DISCIPLES RETURNED TO JERUSALEM AFTER
THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD.

First Point.—Consider how two angels appeared to the disciples and commanded them to return to Jerusalem, and they obeyed, and, as St. Luke says, withdrew into

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the Cenacle. It is fitting that thou shouldst enter there with them to contemplate what they do, and observe in what they occupy themselves, thus to learn how to obey God, and how to dispose thyself for the coming of the Holy Ghost. Contemplate first how, filled with that heavenly wine of the love of Christ, they were unable to efface from their memories the vision of His Ascension, nor from their hearts the desire of following Him, continually meditating on His triumph and glory, and longing to see themselves reunited to Him. Associate thyself with them in this longing, and ascend now in spirit to heaven, raising thy heart above all that is earthly, in order that, when the time comes, thou mayst be able to follow Christ likewise in the flesh.

Second Point.—Meditate what St. Austin¹ teaches, namely, that we can make of our vices a ladder whereby to ascend to Christ, trampling on them, and thus raising ourselves by their means. For, as they detain and abase us when we submit ourselves to them, in like manner they exalt us when we subject them and trample them under foot; despising honours, avarice, and sensual delights, and being thus superior to them, we elevate ourselves towards heaven by as many degrees as are the vices that we trample on. Oh, that thou didst know how to make of thy sins a ladder whereby to ascend with Christ to heaven! Embrace not vices which drag thee down to hell, but despise and trample on them and they will raise thee to heaven. Pride ascends not with Christ, neither does avarice, nor revenge, nor sensuality, nor any other vice, but only humility, patience, charity, meekness, long-suffering, and the other virtues. Implore grace of the Lord, through His glorious Ascension, to know how to fashion this ladder, trampling upon vice and cherishing virtue.

Third Point.—Consider the visits that Christ paid during these days to His apostles, consoling and encourag-

¹ August., Serm. 176, de Ascens.

ing them, and reanimating their hope with the promise of the Holy Ghost. Behold how each one of them offered himself to go throughout the world to preach the Gospel, and to give his life joyfully for the love of Christ, in fulfilment of His command to them on the day of His departure for heaven. Enter amongst them, and offer thyself with them to the Lord to do the like, and to lay down thy life in His service.

Fourth Point.—Contemplate the intercourse they had with the Holy Virgin Mary, our Lady, and how she communicated to them her revelations concerning heaven. Hear her tell them of the triumph with which the Saviour had entered the celestial court, of His coronation, His throne, His offices, and of the pre-eminence accorded to Him by the Eternal Father, as Judge and Advocate of the whole human race. Ponder what joy they experienced in listening to her, what thanks they offered to God for all these things, and what congratulations to Christ and His Holy Mother, and what an increase of devotion they experienced in return. Oh, holy society! oh, celestial intercourse! oh, holy souls who merited such consolations! Grant me, O Lord, grace to meditate Thy mysteries, to contemplate Thy glories, to deserve to rejoice with Thy disciples therein, and to persevere with them in Thy holy service.

FORTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday—Vigil of Pentecost.

HOW THE DISCIPLES PREPARED THEMSELVES FOR THE
COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

First Point.—Consider what St. Luke says,¹ namely, that as soon as Christ ascended into heaven the disciples withdrew to Jerusalem, where they abode during the ten

¹ Acts i.

days that Christ delayed to send them the Holy Ghost, "persevering with one mind in prayer, with the women, and Mary the Mother of Jesus, and with His brethren." Wherein thou hast matter for the points of this meditation, considering the means employed by the apostles to hasten His coming. Consider, first, for what motive Christ did not confer the Holy Ghost on His disciples before His departure for heaven, but so many days afterwards, which was, as St. Basil teaches us, in order that they might desire Him, implore His coming, and esteem Him more when He should come. For like reasons does God delay to grant thee the favours thou solicitest of Him, in order to try thy hope ; and therefore thou shouldst learn from these saints to persevere in the good desires that God gives thee, and to trust in the Lord, that, as He has been pleased to impart them to thee, He will likewise fulfil them.

Second Point.—Consider how they persevered in one mind, with perfect conformity, peace, and concord, without any disagreements or bitterness arising amongst them, united and bound together with the bonds of fraternal charity, that virtue so agreeable to God and to the Holy Ghost, Who comes not on the dissident, but on those who live in peace and concord and are united in charity. As the soul animates the limbs that are united to and form part of the body, in like manner is it with the Holy Ghost, Who is the spirit of love and the bond of charity between the Father and the Son, and as it were the soul of the Church, which abides not in those members who dissent from her, but in those who are united with her by the close bond of fraternal charity. Therefore entreat God to give thee this virtue and grace to live in peace and concord with thy brethren, and resolve in His presence not to sever this union for any earthly interest whatsoever, in order to deserve to receive the Holy Ghost in thy soul.

Third Point.—Consider how they persevered in prayer, imploring all together and each in particular, with tears

and lamentations, of the Father and of the Son to send them the Holy Ghost, and of the Blessed Spirit Himself to come to console, to fortify, and to strengthen them with His grace. And this they did notwithstanding that Christ had given them His word that He would send Him, because they knew that grace only comes from heaven through prayer, though they did not doubt the fulfilment of His promise; but as there was no time fixed for it, they cried out to the Lord, entreating Him to shorten the delay, and to send them this sublime gift, and they implored the Holy Ghost Himself to come. If, therefore, the apostles purchased with their prayers the gift that was already promised to them, how much greater need hast not thou of praying to God to obtain the graces that thou seekest at His hands. If, therefore, thou wouldst obtain mercy from God, resolve firmly to persevere in prayer. Ponder the recollection in which they spent those ten days, setting aside all secular concerns, which is an important condition for praying well, and endeavour to recollect thyself and to imitate them, if thou wouldst receive the Holy Ghost as they did.

Fourth Point.—Consider, lastly, how St. Luke says that they were in the company of the holy women, followers of the Lord, who prayed with them and with the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God; in which thou hast two points of instruction. First, the great chastity of the disciples of the Lord, since, living thus shut up with the women, there was not so much as an evil thought amongst them, but all their thoughts were of heaven and of receiving the Holy Ghost, who, as St. Basil says, comes into the souls of the chaste and pure, and flies from the licentious and immodest, as the dove which symbolises Him flies from unclean and vile places, and comes as if allured to those that are pure and sweet-scented. Wherefore, if thou desirest that He should come into thy soul, cleanse and purify it from all evil odour of this vice and from the corruption of inordinate appetites. The second lesson is to associate thyself with the Blessed

Virgin Mary, as the disciples of Christ did, through whose intercession they obtained the accomplishment of their petition. The Holy Virgin is so powerful, she obtains whatever she solicits from God ; dedicate thyself therefore to her service, seek her patronage, secure her protection, and thou wilt obtain this grace and whatsoever thou seekest from God.

FIFTIETH MEDITATION.

For Whit-Sunday.

ON THE COMING OF THE HOLY GHOST.

First Point.—The first thing that St. Bonaventure meditates in this sublime gift is that Christ our Lord in heaven, moved by His love as well as by the lamentations and prayers of His disciples, and especially by those of His Holy Mother, prayed and besought the Eternal Father to send down the Holy Ghost, and entreated the Holy Spirit Himself to descend upon them. Wherefore, yielding to His supplications, the Holy Ghost came down and consoled and strengthened them with His might. Meditate thou in like manner ; rejoice to have such an intercessor in heaven ; implore Him affectionately to pray for thee, and to obtain the Holy Ghost for thee as He did for His disciples.

Second Point.—Consider what St. Luke relates, viz., that suddenly there was heard a sound as of a mighty wind from heaven ; and he adds, that it came “suddenly,” not because it found them unprepared or unexpectant, but in order to signify that they did not obtain it by their efforts or diligence, but solely by the will and favour of God ; and “from heaven,” because every good gift comes to us from God. Whence thou hast two things to learn : first, that all good things come to thee

from God, and secondly, that they spring not from thy merits, but from His divine mercy and liberality. Be not then puffed up if thou receive some gift, but rather humble thyself the more before the throne of God, giving Him thanks for it, acknowledging it as a favour from His hand, and recognising thy unworthiness to receive it.

Third Point.—Consider how the Holy Spirit came down on that holy family of the Lord, and how, as St. Luke tells us, He filled them all and the whole house with His Spirit and sanctity ; such is His liberality, and such the abundance and generosity with which He does mercy to His elect, that He fills them all with grace, giving to each according to his capacity. Praise Him and be grateful to Him for this liberal plenitude with which He does mercy to His own ; beseech Him to manifest the like towards thee, and not to be sparing towards thy soul, since He is liberal towards all, but to communicate to thee His gifts as He so liberally communicated them on this day to the disciples.

Fourth Point.—Consider the effects produced by the Holy Ghost in that holy company ; contemplate the ineffable joy with which He inundated their souls, the light He gave to their intelligences wherewith to comprehend the divine mysteries, the fire of divine love which He enkindled in their hearts, the energy and resolution He gave to their spirits in order to preach Christ to the world, and to give a thousand lives if they had them for His sake. Ponder how He banished from their souls the darkness of incredulity and the fear they had of the Jews, and how they went forth to preach to them, despising honour and life and all that the world worships. Cry out to heaven and to the Holy Spirit, saying, “ Come, O Divine Spirit, and fill our hearts with the fire of Thy love ; strengthen them with Thy grace and animate them with Thy fervour, in order that we may love, serve, extol, and glorify to the utmost of our strength our Lord Jesus Christ. Banish all darkness, inflame our hearts, strengthen our wills, purify our souls, cleanse our con-

sciences, and give power to our weakness, in order that we may die for His love."

FIFTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE COMING OF THE HOLY GHOST.

First Point.—Consider what St. Luke says, that when the days of Pentecost (which was a feast of the Jewish law) were accomplished, the disciples being all together, the Holy Ghost came down upon them. Wherein thou shouldst ponder the fidelity of Christ to His promises, the certainty of the truth of His words, and how all will infallibly be fulfilled, as He so quickly and abundantly fulfilled that which He had given of sending the Holy Ghost. Ponder how, although seated on the throne of His glory at the right hand of His Eternal Father, He did not forget what He had promised, as men do, but He entreated for its fulfilment until He obtained its accomplishment and sent them the Holy Ghost. Whence thou shouldst draw affections of confidence in the Lord, appreciation of His word, and instruction how to keep thine, not only with men, but much more so with God. Remember how many times thou hast promised to amend and to serve Him, and how ill thou dost keep thy promises, and beg pardon thereof. Learn likewise not to be puffed up by prosperity, but to remember the lowly, as Christ forgot not His own, and neither does He forget thee.

Second Point.—Consider the thanks which all that holy congregation offered to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost for His coming. Spare not thy voice, but give thanks to God for the mercies He does thee; to the Son because He negotiates them for thee, to the

Holy Ghost because He communicates them to thee, acknowledging that they are all gifts from His Divine hand.

Third Point.—Consider the congratulations that the disciples gave to each other for this signal benefit which they had received from God, and especially those which they offered to the Blessed Virgin, to whose merits and prayers after Christ they attributed it, and how they thanked her. Consider, moreover, how, inflamed with this sacred fire, they urged each other to praise the Lord, and encouraged one another in all the things of His service, which are affections inspired by the Holy Ghost. Rejoice at the manifold joys experienced by the apostles; congratulate them on the blessing received; learn fervour from them, and entreat them all, but specially the Blessed Virgin, to obtain for thee the gift of the Holy Spirit of God.

Fourth Point.—Consider how very perfect and ardent was the love that the Holy Ghost enkindled in the hearts of the faithful, not only towards God, but likewise towards their neighbour, without limit of time or place, as a fire which warms all equally. Thus they went forth at once to communicate to their neighbour the gift they had received, and to give to others the tidings that had been given to them. Turn thine eyes on thyself, and see whether thou hast a spark of this sacred fire wherewith to love both God and thy neighbour, and not to be sparing of thy gifts to thy brethren. Weep over thy poverty, and entreat the Divine Spirit to descend upon thee, and to inflame thee with love for Him and for thy neighbour, as He did the holy apostles.

FIFTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE MANNER OF THE COMING OF THE HOLY GHOST.

First Point.—Consider how the Holy Ghost came down in a mighty wind, because air is the breath of man, without which he cannot live, and when it fails him he dies; in like manner the Holy Ghost is the breath of the soul, without Whom it is dead to grace. Ponder that to preserve the presence of the Holy Ghost is to preserve thy life, for without Him thy soul is dead; entreat Him, serve Him, and, as far as in thee lies, compel Him not to leave thee, since He is the life of thy soul and the essence of grace, and resolve in His presence to forfeit all created things rather than to lose Him. Men of the world postpone all that they worship to the life of the body, and we should prize infinitely more that of the soul, which, as St. Basil says, has its source in the Holy Spirit.

Second Point.—Consider how St. Luke affirms that the Holy Ghost came as a mighty wind which filled the whole house; because, as St. Ambrose says, the Holy Ghost suffers not delay, nor tepidity, nor cowardice in His holy service, but is very fervent, active, and prompt in His resolutions and undertakings. Oh, that thou hadst a spark of this Divine Spirit wherewith to enkindle thy soul and to banish thence all tepidity! Entreat the Lord to bestow it upon thee, in order that thou mayst at once and without delay begin to serve Him. It filled the whole house, because the Holy Ghost fills all the powers of the soul in which He abides, illuminating the intelligence with His science, filling the memory with His presence, inflaming the will with His Divine fire, imprinting on the imagination the representation of Divine things, and directing all the faculties heavenwards, spiritu-

alising them so as to despise what is earthly. O most Holy Spirit, who fillest every place! leave not my poor abode empty; come, oh come, and console Thy servant, and let not a single corner of my poor dwelling be other than wholly Thine.

Third Point.—Consider that the Holy Ghost came in the form of tongues, to signify that He came to give wisdom to men and to manifest to them the most secret and exalted mysteries of heaven, and in order that they should preach and declare them to all men. Thus to the Holy Ghost is due all the science of the doctors and the wisdom of the Church, the knowledge of Catholic truth, the accuracy of the desires of pontiffs, of councils, and of prelates. Give Him many thanks for all this, and entreat Him to teach thee, to enlighten thee, and to give thee a tongue of fire wherewith to be able to praise and bless Him, and to be useful to thy neighbours by directing them heavenwards.

Fourth Point.—The Holy Ghost came in the form of fire, because fire illuminates, inflames, purifies, rises upwards, and unites things that are separate. Thus the Holy Spirit enlightens the understanding with heavenly truths, inflames the will with Divine love, purifies the heart from the dross of vice, raises our desires towards heaven, and unites discordant wills. O sacred fire! come and take possession of my soul, in order that it be illuminated and enlightened to travel towards the port of glory. Inflammé it with the purest love of my God, purify it from all dross of vice, that, despising all earthly things, it may ever aspire to what is celestial and Divine, and remain intimately united with my Creator, and bound to my neighbour with the bond of perfect charity for ever. Amen.

*FIFTY-THIRD MEDITATION.**For the Wednesday.***ON THE MAGNITUDE AND THE VALUE OF THE GIFT OF
THE HOLY GHOST.**

First Point.—In order to discover the sublime greatness of this gift, and to know what thou dost owe to God for it, and how thou shouldst prize it, it is desirable to consider four things, which will serve for the four points of this meditation. Namely, Who bestows it? to whom is it given? what is the gift? and wherefore is it bestowed? First, consider that the giver is God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and that the value of this gift is immeasurably increased on account of the infinite sanctity, majesty, and pre-eminence of the giver, for which reason alone its value would be most exalted, even though in itself it were less great. It comes from the Father and the Son because they send it, and it is the gift of the Holy Ghost Himself because He comes voluntarily to man, urged by His infinite love and charity. Thus, on account of the source whence it comes and of the Hand that bestows it, is its value and price most exalted, and as such shouldst thou prize it and render thanks for it.

Second Point.—Consider to whom this gift is given and to whom it comes, namely, to man, who is most unworthy of so sublime a gift, with regard both to his body and to his soul. For as regards the body, he is a sink of miseries and a heap of corruption, as St. Bernard tells us; and as regards the soul, he is full of abominations and sins; and the Holy Ghost is so bountiful and so holy that He communicates Himself liberally and lovingly to those even who have most offended Him; and, as the prophet Joel says,¹ He is poured out “upon all flesh” without exception. If, therefore, it was so marvellous an act for the Eternal Word to unite Himself to one

¹ Joel ii.

man, that Christ, speaking to Nicodemus, said,¹ that "God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son," boasting as it were of that love, how much more has He not shown His love in giving the Holy Ghost, not in order to unite Himself with one man, but with all by His grace. Oh, most sublime gift! how great is Thy value, and how great the mercy Thou hast shown us! Come to my poor soul, since Thou condescendest to such mire, and art not disgusted by our miseries and sins; sanctify it and honour it by Thy presence and Thy grace.

Third Point.—Consider the magnitude of this gift in itself, for it is the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, and essentially the gift of the Most High, because He has nothing more to bestow, having given the source of all gifts; for in this gift alone all others are contained and all graces. Wherefore did Christ say that in him who shall receive it, it shall "become a fountain of water springing up into life everlasting." Behold what a sublime gift thou hast been made worthy to receive from God, and cease not to give Him infinite thanks for it. Acquire great confidence in the Lord that He will grant thee whatsoever thou dost ask; for, having given thee the greatest of gifts, He will not refuse what is less, and He Who without merit of thine has given thee the Holy Ghost will give thee all things with Him.

Fourth Point.—The value of this sublime gift is likewise increased by the motives which urged God to bestow it, which are His infinite goodness and charity, the love He has for man, the wants which He sees man to suffer, his desolation and orphanhood. The Holy Ghost comes to console him, to strengthen him, to be his Father, Master, and Advocate, in the place of Christ our Lord, fulfilling the promise the Redeemer made before leaving His disciples when He said,² "I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete" and Comforter, "that He may abide with you for ever." If, then, as Christ tells us,

¹ John iii.

² John xiv.

a cup of cold water given to the needy is of such value that He will give in return for it eternal life, of what value must not the Holy Ghost be, Who is given to men when in such dire necessity? Raise thy heart to God, and entreat all the inhabitants of heaven to praise His infinite goodness, and offer Him thyself all the praises given Him by all creatures visible and invisible. Perceiving how bound thou art to be grateful and to serve so exalted a Lord for so incomparable a favour and so sublime a gift, think what thou shouldst give Him in return for it. Weep to see how ill thou hast served Him heretofore and offer thyself at His feet for His perpetual slave.

FIFTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE CONDUCT OF THE APOSTLES AFTER THEY HAD
RECEIVED THE HOLY GHOST.

First Point.—St. Luke says that when the apostles had received the Holy Ghost “they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak.” Wherein thou shouldst ponder, first, that both men and women received the Holy Spirit, and the men alone preached, whilst the women were silent and remained recollected, because to each one was given grace to live holily according to their state and profession. And, as St. Paul says, although the Spirit is the same in all, yet it produces not in all similar effects, but it distributes its gifts and graces according to the condition of each one. Thus it wrought recollection and silence in the women and the power of the word in the men. Consider what is thy state and profession, and entreat the Holy Ghost to give thee His gifts in order that thou mayst fulfil thy duties, and let not the evil spirit deceive thee into believing anything to be from the Holy Ghost which is not in accordance with thy condition.

Second Point.—Consider what science and wisdom and what fervour of soul the Holy Ghost infused into those poor fishermen, and how they went forth at once with courage and resolution to preach to the people, speaking in various languages to the great admiration of all. Bless the Lord, Who in one moment works such wonders, and acquire great confidence in God Who strengthens thee, and in Whom thou canst do all things. Recognise the facility with which He makes the ignorant learned and sinners preachers, and hope in the Lord that He will give thee His Spirit and the courage necessary for what He requires of thee, and that in an instant He will instruct and strengthen thee for the accomplishment of what He enjoins, however arduous it may be, as He taught and strengthened the apostles for such great things so much above their strength.

Third Point.—Consider how St. Luke says that the people, hearing the apostles thus suddenly begin to preach, at first mocked them, and censured them as drunkards and madmen who were excited with wine. Such are the judgments of men; but they did not therefore desist from carrying on their ministry and preaching. From the consideration of this point thou shouldst draw, first, courage and resolution to endure the scorn of men for the love of God, as the apostles did; and secondly, a profound conviction that the works of God attract the contradictions and scoffings of men, and that thou shouldst not therefore abandon them, but rather persevere therein, as the holy apostles did, strengthened and enlightened by the power of the Holy Spirit, Who will not fail thee if thou be faithful to Him.

Fourth Point.—Consider the conclusion and winding up of this event, and how St. Peter, as captain of that heavenly company, came forward to defend the truth, and addressed the people with such fervour of spirit that He converted five thousand persons to the faith of Jesus Christ: such fruit do they obtain who preach with the voice of the Holy Ghost. Wherefrom thou shouldst

learn to be silent, and not to defend thyself when others condemn thee, trusting to God, Who will defend thee as He did the apostles by means of St. Peter, and clearing them from this imputation with so much profit both of spiritual merit before God and of temporal honour before men. Learn likewise how much fruit preaching with fervour of spirit produces, and beseech God to bestow this on thee, and implore the Divine Spirit Himself to teach thee, as He taught the disciples of the Lord.

FIFTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE ENDS FOR WHICH THE HOLY GHOST CAME.

First Point.—The first end for which the Holy Ghost came down on men was in order to be their Father in the place of Christ, to console, to shelter, to protect, and to defend them as His children, according to the oft-repeated promise of Christ when consoling the apostles at His departure, whereby He engaged to send them the Divine Spirit, Who should replace Him, and be their Father, their Comforter, and Protector, as He had been whilst living in the world. Whence thou shouldst derive affections of great joy at the possession of such a Father, Who leaves thee not, but is always with thee, and at having such a Protector and Comforter as the Holy Ghost. Contemplate deliberately this gift, and note what thou owest to the Holy Ghost as to a Father, and how grateful thou shouldst be to Him Who assists thee in thy needs, Who consoles thee in thy sorrows, and Who defends thee in thy encounters; and have not recourse therein to creatures, abandoning thy Creator, lest He should abandon thee if thou forsake Him.

Second Point.—The second end for which the Holy Ghost came was in order to teach men and to be their

Master, according to those words of Christ when taking leave of His apostles,¹ "The Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom My Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you." From which thou shouldst learn the conformity which exists between Christ and the Holy Ghost in doctrine, since in no single word is there the least discrepancy between them. Solicit this grace not to contradict others, but to accept all that is said and taught thee, which is a virtue of the Holy Ghost. Recognise how sublime a Master thou hast; take thy place in His school; become His disciple; consult Him in thy doubts; learn from none other. Entreat Him to teach thee, hearken to His voice, and follow the light He bestows, and thou wilt always do right.

Third Point.—The Holy Ghost came likewise to banish sin from the world, as Christ foretold when He said,² "When He (the Paraclete) shall come, He will convince the world of sin." O Holy Spirit! illuminate my heart and banish from my soul all the darkness of the sins of my past life, and permit me not to fall into them again. For this reason the Holy Ghost descended on Christ in the Jordan in the form of a dove, because, as the dove has no gall, so neither does the Holy Ghost suffer any sin where He abides. Ponder the purity He requires in the soul in which He dwells, and purify thine from every kind of fault, in order that He may abide therein.

Fourth Point.—Another end for which the Holy Ghost came was in order to confirm the apostles in grace for the ministry to which they were called. Thus St. Luke tells us³ that the tongues of fire "sat upon every one of them," because He came to remain, and not temporarily, as He does on others. This is a most signal favour from God, and as far as in thee lies thou shouldst strive to merit and to obtain it. Give thanks to the

¹ John xiv.² John xvi.³ Acts ii.

Holy Ghost for having conferred it upon the apostles ; entreat Him with tears to take up His abode in thy soul, not to pass hastily away, but to make it His dwelling-place. On thy part, endeavour to be pleasing to Him, detain Him, and compel Him to remain, by purity of conscience, by humble prayer, with lamentations and good works. Consider leisurely whether there be in thee anything displeasing to Him ; remove it with diligence, and adorn thy abode with all that thou conceivest to be most pleasing to Him.

FIFTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE SEVEN GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST.

Let us meditate to-day on the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, of which Isaias makes mention in the eleventh chapter of his prophecy, and which he gives in the following order : " The spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and of godliness, and of the fear of the Lord," with which we are armed to resist the temptations of Satan, in order that we may not be ensnared by him. Wherefore it is well to meditate first on the favour done us by the Divine Spirit by infusing into us, as St. Thomas¹ teaches, the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, together with His divine gifts, and by strengthening us with them for the continual warfare that we have to wage against vice. St. Gregory² in his " Treatise on Morals " explains in detail the vices against which we are armed by each of these gifts : these are to suggest the points of this meditation.

¹ Thom. 1, 2, 9, 68.

² Greg. Mor. 2, c. 26.

First Point.—The first is the gift of wisdom, which, according to St. Gregory, dispels and extirpates folly and ignorance concerning the things of God, which engender weariness in the soul, indispose it for intercourse and communication with God, as well as for His service. The gift of wisdom, on the contrary, produces taste and relish for celestial things, and banishes the weariness caused by ignorance and folly. Observe whether thy soul harbours the like; and when thou art threatened therewith, cry out to the Holy Ghost, and entreat Him to fortify thee with the gift of wisdom, and to banish from thee all distaste for the service of God.

Second Point.—The second is the gift of understanding, because the Holy Spirit illuminates the understanding of men against the mists and clouds which the devil interposes in order to obscure the truths of our holy faith. Thus, when these arise, have recourse to the Holy Spirit, in order that He may enlighten thy understanding and increase it in thee, making thee steadfast in the truths of faith, and dispelling the darkness which the evil spirit interposes to obscure them.

Third Point.—The third is the gift of science or knowledge; this concerns inferior things, and arms us against deceit, forgetfulness, and carelessness, rendering us wary and cautious on occasion, and not hasty lest we fail in the service of God.

Fourth Point.—The fourth is the gift of counsel, which arms us against imprudence, teaching us how to preserve the right medium in the exercise of the cardinal virtues, without falling into extremes.

Fifth Point.—The fifth is the gift of fortitude, which is opposed to weakness and pusillanimity, giving us courage not to yield to the enemy, and strength wherewith to fight until he is conquered. What would become of us if the Holy Ghost were to withdraw His hand and leave us to our poverty and weakness? Think over this, and how thou owest all that thou hast to His mercy and protection, and entreat Him with humility to strengthen

thee with His grace, and not to permit thee to fall into temptation.

Sixth Point.—The sixth is the gift of godliness or piety, which opposes itself to hardness of heart towards our neighbours, and inclines us to succour, assist, and console them in their trials, and this is a gift of the Holy Ghost.

Seventh Point.—The seventh and last is the gift of the holy fear of God, which restrains us and keeps us in check, in order that we may not offend Him by rash daring, pride, and presumption. Meditate at leisure on each of these gifts; ponder their importance by the consideration of the need thou hast of them, and of what would befall thee, if any one of them failed thee. Examine thy conscience, observing in which of these gifts thou art wanting, and which of them has decreased in thy soul, and beseech the Divine Spirit to deign to renew it in thee, to console thee, and to fortify and assist thee with His gifts and graces.

FIFTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the First Sunday after Pentecost.

ON THE MOST HOLY TRINITY, FATHER, SON, AND
HOLY GHOST.

First Point.—Consider the incomprehensible majesty of God, Who, being one in essence, is three in Person. Rise up with admiration to the throne of His greatness, to venerate His power, to appreciate His sanctity and the extreme perfection of His Godhead. Contemplate the eternity of His beginning, that existence of Himself independent of any other being, and that omnipotence without limit. Behold Him adored, worshipped, feared, loved and obeyed by the seraphim and cherubim, and by all the choirs of angels. Cover thy face as they do before

His throne, confessing that thou canst not comprehend His majesty nor His infinite greatness. Prostrate thyself at His feet ; reverence, worship, fear and love Him as they do ; tremble at His power ; cease not to praise Him, and prepare thyself to obey Him, as the angels do in heaven.

Second Point.—Consider how the Father proceeds from none other, and how the Son proceeds from the Father by knowledge. The Father, contemplating Himself and knowing Himself, thus engenders His own image in all things like unto Himself ; and the Holy Ghost proceeds from the intimate love of both, and is the bond of union between the two. Contemplate this sublime truth, and ask of the Lord a lively faith in so exalted a mystery ; humble thyself before Him, acknowledging thy dulness, and that thou hast neither the capacity nor power to know Him as He is.

Third Point.—Consider how, being three distinct Persons, they are equal one with the other, neither existing before the others nor after the others ; neither being either greater or less. Nor is there any difference of will, but all three are unanimous, conformable to each other, and united and bound together with the bond of eternal charity. Praise God for so ineffable a mystery and for such inaccessible sanctity, and endeavour to imitate His virtues by manifesting charity and peace towards all, avoiding all desires of preferences, exceptions, and singularity.

Fourth Point.—Consider that, although the three Divine Persons are in all things equal, yet to each is attributed especial prerogatives and attributes—to the Father, omnipotence and the work of the creation ; to the Son, wisdom and the work of redemption ; to the Holy Ghost, love and the work of sanctification. Raise thy heart to the most Holy Trinity ; contemplate its perfections, and the attributes, eminence, and properties of each one of the Divine Persons. Praise the Lord for them ; rejoice at His sublime excellence and perfection, and see

how much thou owest Him. Render thanks to the Father because He created thee, as well as all things else, in order that thou mightst serve Him ; to the Son, because He redeemed thee, becoming man for thee ; to the Holy Ghost, because He has sanctified thee, communicating His grace to thee so abundantly. Beg pardon for thy ingratitude, and solicit grace to be grateful for the future, and to profit by the favours thou receivest from the hands of God.

FIFTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE FAREWELL OF CHRIST TO HIS DISCIPLES ACCORDING
TO THE GOSPEL OF ST. MATTHEW XXVIII.

Before going up to heaven Christ assembled His apostles, communicated to them the power He had received from His Eternal Father in heaven and on earth, and commanded them to go and preach to the whole world what He had taught them, and to baptize all in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, promising them to be with them till the end of time.

First Point.—Consider how Christ says that all power has been given Him in heaven and on earth, to bind and to loose, to judge the world and to draw it to His service. Rejoice to have such a Father and so powerful a Lord, and acquire great confidence of obtaining what thou dost solicit, since He Who loves thee and so earnestly desires thy welfare has so much authority both in heaven and on earth. Ponder the power and majesty to which Christ was exalted by the Father on account of the profound humility with which He subjected Himself to men on earth, and derive thence a firm purpose of humbling thyself, and of enduring the affronts and scorn of men in the hope of receiving thy reward from God.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ limited not the power He had received to Himself alone, and disdained not to share it with men, but rather of His pure bounty He communicated it to His disciples, for the good of the whole world. Give Him many thanks for this favour, and for the benefit thou derivest thence when from the hands of His ministers thou receivest grace and the remission of thy sins. Learn not to deal out sparingly to others the gifts thou receivest from God, avariciously hoarding them for thyself, but learn of His liberality to use them for the good of all. Behold how Christ extended His power all over the universe, both for the present and for future generations, to the end of ages, and set no bounds to thy generosity, but extend it to all, in imitation of the Saviour.

Third Point.—Ponder those words of Christ, “Baptizing them, and teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” For the first thing necessary is the faith which is received in baptism, and the second thing is that it be accompanied by good works, keeping the commandments of God. Derive hence a high appreciation of divine faith, without which none can be saved, and taking to thyself the words of the Saviour, endeavour to instruct all in the way to heaven, sparing no effort to direct them on the road thither.

Fourth Point.—Ponder those last words of the Redeemer, “Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.” Consider how great a favour this is, and how great is the love from which it springs; contemplate thy Master ever by thy side, assisting and strengthening thee; render Him a thousand thanks for this benefit, and let His presence encourage thee to undertake whatever may suggest itself as conducive to His service, confident that His grace will enable thee successfully to carry out whatsoever thou undertakest for His love.

*FIFTY-NINTH MEDITATION.**For the Tuesday.*

ON THE GOSPEL—(LUKE VI.)

Christ exhorts us in this Gospel to be merciful to our neighbours as God also is merciful to us, forgiving injuries, neither judging nor condemning others, because the same measure that we use towards others shall be used towards us, and if we consider our own faults, we shall not judge severely those of our neighbour.

First Point.—Contemplate the infinite mercy of God, which our Redeemer proposes to us as our model, and ponder the offences that are daily committed against Him throughout the universe, and how He endures them with unspeakable patience. Ponder how, being able so easily to avenge Himself, He is so far from doing so, that with intense compassion He does good to those that offend Him, and actually preserves their life, and sends them sunshine, water, air, health, and food for the preservation of their existence. Remember that He is thy Father, although thou art so unworthy a child of His, and be thou also merciful to thy neighbour, as thy Father is merciful towards thee, in order that thou mayst deserve on earth to call thyself His, and in heaven to enjoy Him hereafter.

Second Point.—Consider in detail the offences that God has endured and still endures from thee, and which He daily pardons. Reflect how thou wouldst long ago have been in hell had God used thee with the severity that thou makest use of towards thy neighbour. See what great need thou hast that God should pardon thee, and do thou forgive others, “for with the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.”

Third Point.—Meditate those words of Christ, “Judge not and you shall not be judged.” Consider how fallible

are the judgments of men ; recall how often thou hast been deceived in thine, and that only to the justice and tribunal of Christ does it belong to judge others. Weep over the faults thou hast committed in this regard, and purpose amendment before God, and thou wilt not be judged by men, nor condemned on this account before the Lord. Take His advice and look to thine own faults, and thou wilt not be preoccupied about those of thy neighbour.

Fourth Point.—Consider, lastly, what the Saviour says, “ Give and it shall be given to you : good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over ; ” because as God is the remunerator, and He is in Himself so rich and generous, He will render to us a hundred for one for whatever we give for His sake. Oh, how great is the virtue of almsgiving, and of both spiritual and corporal works of mercy, since God so pledges Himself to reward us for them with His own hand, and with such abundant profit and usury as is a hundred for one ! Ponder how pleasing this virtue of charity is in the sight of God, how profitable to thy soul, and what spiritual and temporal blessings God bestows on those who practise it. Draw hence a firm resolution to exercise it towards thy neighbour to the utmost of thy power, and implore the grace of God to keep thy resolve.

SIXTIETH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE LIFE LEAD BY THE FIRST CHRISTIANS, AND THE
ELECTION OF ST. BARNABAS TO THE APOSTOLATE BY
THE HOLY GHOST.

First Point.—Consider how St. Luke tells us that after the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles,¹

¹ Acts ii.

although the newly baptized Christians were so numerous that in Jerusalem alone on the first day there were more than eight thousand, they lived in such perfect peace and concord that they had, as it were, but one heart and one mind. Their possessions were in common, and all that they had they sold, and laid the price thereof at the feet of the apostles; they frequented Holy Communion every day, and passed their time in prayer and good works. All this St. Luke narrates in order that we should see the effects produced in those first Christians by the grace of the Holy Ghost. Place thy hand on thy breast and see whether He has wrought the like effects in thee, whether thou hast corresponded to His grace by the performance of similar acts, and whether thou givest proof of His dwelling within thee. Entreat the Lord to send the Holy Ghost upon thee in order that thou mayst imitate their lives; blush at the difference that exists between thy life and theirs, at the tepidity in which thou lingerest, and at seeing how ill thou dost correspond to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost.

Second Point.—Consider how one of these faithful Christians was St. Barnabas, who, with St. Paul, was chosen by the Holy Ghost to be an apostle of the Lord, because of all others he exercised himself in holiness and in fervour of preaching, whereby he merited to receive this favour from God. Ponder how God does not limit Himself to time, since after Christ was already in heaven He chose these two saints for His apostles, because their life and preaching rendered them worthy of that dignity. Give Him thanks for this, and take courage by their example to serve Him fervently, despising the world, and giving thyself wholly to His service.

Third Point.—Consider how St. Barnabas traversed the world as a pilgrim, illuminating it with the light of his teaching; consider what trials he underwent, what persecutions he suffered, what victories he won, and what fruit he produced in souls by means of his preaching and of his holy life. Acquire energy from his example

to walk in his footsteps, if God should call thee to the sacred ministry, confiding in the Divine power that He will give thee grace in proportion to the necessities of thy vocation and of the ministry and office intrusted to thee, as He did to St. Barnabas.

Fourth Point.—Consider his martyrdom, and how he sealed with his blood the evangelical doctrine that he had taught, giving his life joyfully for Christ; and then raise thine eyes to heaven and contemplate the crown with which God rewarded him in the kingdom of His glory. His toils passed away and his torments were soon over, but his glory endures and will endure for ever. Contemplate this truth attentively, and enkindle in thy heart lively desires of serving God and of suffering for Him, and ask His grace to fulfil them, and, like St. Barnabas, to attain everlasting happiness.

SIXTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR.

First Point.—Contemplate the magnitude of this sublime gift, in which the Redeemer of the world gives thee His Body, His Blood, His Soul, His very Self, alive and glorious, and with Himself His Divinity, a jewel of such price that it cannot be compared with any created thing in heaven or on earth. If, therefore, it may happen to thee at times to find thyself so obliged for an earthly gift, which thou receivest from a mortal man, that thou knowest not how to repay it, and that thou mayst even resolve to give thy life in return, consider what value thou shouldst set on this jewel which the King of heaven has given thee, and see how thou canst be grateful enough for it. Weep over thy ingratitude, quicken thy faith and knowledge of this mystery, so as to prize and

venerate this sublime gift, and to be as grateful for it as thou shouldst be.

Second Point.—Consider the reverence, the respect, the veneration and devotion that the angels and saints of heaven have for this Divine Sacrament. See with what sentiments of love, fear, and reverence they gaze thereon, and what causes move them to this veneration. Marvel at beholding so great a Lord confined in so small a space, to see Him Who is seated on the throne of the Most High contained in a host on the altar, Him Whom the seraphim worship with trembling awe in the hands of a mortal man, and Him, the sole vision of Whom fills the blessed with rapture, become food and entering the vile hearts of men. Compare this act with that glory, this humility with that majesty, this dwelling-place with that sublime throne in light inaccessible. Marvel with the angels at such condescension in the midst of such exalted majesty, and at such an excess of love, and cease not to venerate, to praise, and to bless the Lord for it.

Third Point.—Ponder the facility we have for receiving and possessing this incomparable gift, and how, although so sublime, thou canst behold It, approach It, communicate with It, and receive It into the breast whenever thou pleasest, without difficult negotiations, support of patrons, or human endeavours. Consider what difficulties are encountered in obtaining speech with the monarchs of the earth, and in securing any gift or favour from men; what preliminaries, what solicitations, and what exertions have to be made; and how easily does God dispense to us the highest of all gifts, a prize of greater value than anything that we can conceive. Give Him many thanks for this, and, at the same time accuse thyself of tepidity in the frequentation of this sacred table, and of lack of reverence for this heavenly food, and humble thyself before the Blessed Sacrament, imploring pardon.

Fourth Point.—Consider, on the one hand, with what

reverence this sacrament should be honoured, and with what purity of soul and body It should be received; and, on the other, behold with what irreverence It is treated by heretics and infidels, with what evil consciences It is received by sinners, and with what tepidity It is approached even by some priests and religious, who should be better prepared. Consider what offences are committed against the Lord through this incomparable favour that He does man, in giving Himself to him and compassionate Him, weep and bewail His sufferings in this Sublime Sacrament. Ponder His patience amidst so many injuries, and learn to suffer those inflicted on thee, and, as far as thou canst, prevent those that are done to God in the Blessed Sacrament.

SIXTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE LOVE OF CHRIST IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT
OF THE ALTAR.

First Point.—In order to have some conception of the immense love that Christ manifests towards us in the most Holy Sacrament of the altar, it is well to ponder four things, which may serve as points for this meditation: namely, Who bestows it? what is the gift bestowed? to whom? and for what motive? With regard to the first, consider that He Who bestows this gift is Christ, true God and true man, the Only-Begotten of the Father, as God His equal in all things, infinite, immense, omnipotent, all-wise, noble, rich, and powerful, and possessing all the other attributes of God, Word of the Father, and consubstantial with Him. Ponder what gift could proceed from so great a Lord, from the God of God! On which account alone the gift would be of infinite value, even though It were not, as It is, infinite

in Itself. Whence it follows that the love with which It is given is infinite, as the Person Who bestows It is infinite. Dig deep into this mine of reflection, and marvel at the greatness of the love of Christ in this most Holy Sacrament; give Him many thanks for It, and in return offer Him with gratitude all the love of thy heart.

Second Point.—Consider what is the gift bestowed, which is, as we have said, His Flesh, His Blood, His Soul, and His Divinity, united in the Person of the Divine Word, of the second Person of the most Holy Trinity, His omnipotence, His wisdom, His sanctity, His grace without any reserve. He does not give thee His treasures only, but, what is more, He gives Himself with them—a gift so great, that no angel ever received the like; neither could man have conceived it with his imagination, or desired it with his will, far less given voice to his desire by asking for it with his lips. Truly the magnitude of the love that our Redeemer bears towards us exceeds all that human intelligence can conceive; only Divine wisdom could imagine so marvellous a scheme of love, and find means to realise it. If here on earth a jewel bestowed by a prince is prized because it is his gift, and is preserved in a setting of gold and silver, and made an heirloom for a perpetual memorial of the fact; think and consider how we should prize a treasure of such infinite value as this, with which no created thing will bear comparison; this jewel from the treasury of God, given by His Divine Hand, and in which we receive Himself who bestows It. Beg of God His grace wherewith to comprehend Its value, and that reverence and respect with which thou shouldst treat It, and endeavour from the consideration of the value of this gift to conceive the immensity of His love.

Third Point.—Consider to whom it is given—namely, to man, a vile worm, a heap of earth, a sink of corruption, formed from the dust of the earth; and in particular to thee, who, both as regards the body and the soul, art a source of miseries and sins. And consider that God

deigns to come into thy dwelling and to enter an abode so obscure, so vile, and unworthy, only for thy good. Verily the immense charity that He has for man and for thee in particular could alone move Him to this. The magnificent temple erected by King Solomon was one of the wonders of the world, and although it was a marvel of magnificence, riches, and perfection, yet he ceased not to wonder that God should deign to visit it. How much more might he not wonder, and with reason, that God should come and inhabit the bodies of sinful men out of the greatness of His love for them? O Lord! may the angels eternally praise Thee, for I have neither voice nor knowledge how to praise and bless Thee as Thou deservest for such proofs of love. That Thou shouldst permit me to appear in Thy presence, being Who Thou art and I what I am, were a most exalted favour and a great proof of love; but how much more that Thou shouldst come to my poor abode and give Thyself to be my food! Oh, Lord! this exceeds my poor capacity. I can neither comprehend it nor worthily praise Thee for it.

Fourth Point.—Consider the motive that impelled Him to give Himself to man as food, confining His greatness within the limits of a host, not once, but many times, and in so many places, at all hours, for all persons, great and small, rich and poor, who may desire to receive Him. It was for no personal interest but for our sake, and for our welfare, for our salvation, and because of the love He bears us, that He conceived this unheard-of scheme for uniting Himself intimately with man and with thee in His virtues, as food is assimilated with the person who eats it; neither could love be strained any further. Contemplate the fire that burns in His breast when He enters thine, and consider Who it is that so loves thee and enters under thy roof, Who it is that has such tenderness for thee, and what thou shouldst do for Him. Consider what an obligation He lays thee under, what a debt thou dost contract by receiving this favour from His hand. Cast thyself at His feet, recognise thy unworthiness, and

acknowledge thyself His debtor. Offer Him the praise and thanks of all creatures, together with thy soul and body, thy understanding, thy memory, and thy will, all that thou art, and all that thou canst to serve Him eternally.

SIXTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE REVERENCE, ESTEEM, AND DEVOTION WE SHOULD
MANIFEST TOWARDS THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT,
AFTER THE EXAMPLE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

First Point.—Consider, first, that, as St. Peter Damian observes, we owe this Sacrament in a great measure to the Blessed Virgin, because she gave Christ the Body and Blood which He has left us in this Divine Food. Thus thou shouldst consider, as is indeed the fact, that thou receivest part of the flesh and blood of this heavenly Lady, according to which St. Bernard, whenever he communicated, imagined himself to receive a drop of milk from her most pure breast, with which he feasted and delighted his soul. Oh, if with these or the like considerations we all approached the sacred table, how much greater fruit should we not derive than we do from our communions! Acquire from this meditation a knowledge of what thou owest to the Blessed Virgin, and of the respect and devotion with which thou shouldst treat so precious a portion of herself.

Second Point.—Consider the appreciation the Blessed Virgin always had of this Divine Sacrament, which St. Ambrose tells us she especially recommended to the care of the apostles at the time of her death as the most precious treasure of her heart. Consider her words as addressed to thee; hearken to them as from her lips; ponder how thou canst put them into practice, and how

excel in devotion and reverence for this most heavenly sacrament, and leave nothing untried to achieve this.

Third Point.—Consider the frequency with which the Blessed Virgin herself received this most Holy Sacrament, many grave authors affirming that she communicated daily from the hand of St. John the Evangelist, with unspeakable consolation to her own soul and edification to the Church. This is equally the case with those souls who worthily prepare themselves to receive it frequently, in imitation of her example, and profit by this celestial bread, which seasoned as it were the three measures of meal, viz., the body, soul, and divinity of Christ, for the spiritual health of the whole human race. Consider this point, and derive thence great affection for this most Divine Sacrament, and a firm purpose of imitating this Lady, and pleasing her by preparing thyself to communicate frequently according to her example.

Fourth Point.—Consider the dispositions with which the Blessed Virgin prepared herself for the sacred table, the sensible devotion with which she approached to communicate, and the thanksgiving she offered after receiving. Penetrate by meditation into the interior of that most blessed soul; contemplate its purity, and the interior acts of love and charity, faith, hope, supplication, contemplation, and humility with which she disposed herself to receive her own Son in the blessed Sacrament. Behold how far she exceeded the angels in all this, and with what purity greater than that of the heavens she approached to receive Him whom she had brought forth. With what sweet colloquies and memories she entertained Him in her soul, recalling the time when she bore Him in her womb, gave Him birth with such intense joy and delight, fed Him with the milk from her pure breast, and carried Him in her arms. Behold what caresses and favours she received in return from the Son, who finding himself again in her breast, recalled all that took place during His former sojourn there. Contemplate all these things, and entreat the Blessed Virgin to give thee a

share of the preparedness with which she received Him, and to obtain for thee the grace to purify thy soul for His coming, and to render due thanks after receiving Him.

SIXTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Second Sunday after Pentecost.

ON THE PARABLE OF THE SUPPER—(LUKE XIV.)

The Gospel places before us the picture of a great supper that a householder gave, and those who had been invited having excused themselves, he ordered the poor, the blind, the lame, and the maimed to be called in to enjoy it, depriving thereof those who refused to attend.

First Point.—Consider that, as St. Austin says, the householder is Christ Himself, Who ordered the great supper of the most blessed Sacrament for the nourishment of souls, and invited many to come to it; because He most generously offers it to all who are willing to come and partake of His banquet. Ponder the love He manifests towards men in preparing for them this heavenly supper; what liberality He exhibits in not closing the door against any one, but rather calling and inviting all, saying: "Come and eat, My friends." See the care and providence He has over His chosen ones, since, whilst they are unmindful of it, He prepares a banquet and supper for them. Draw from all this ardent affections of love for Him Who so loves thee, of confidence in Him Who is so solicitous and anxious for thy welfare, of gratitude to Him Who is so liberal towards thee, and of compassion for thy neighbour, being generous towards all after the example of Christ.

Second Point.—Consider how the Saviour says that He made a great supper, and yet He only prepared one dish, and of this meat one only morsel; but such that alone it surpasses all food of heaven and of earth. Contem-

plate the excellence and price of this morsel, and the perfection and substance of this meat, which is no other than the Body and Blood of the Lord Himself Who bestows it. Therefore does He call it "meat indeed," because it alone is true food; for none other sustains the soul and preserves true life, that of the Spirit, but this one alone. Marvel at the wisdom of the Most High, and at the inventions of His infinite charity which found this means of doing good to man. See how much He gives thee in this one morsel, and how thou shouldst prepare thyself to receive Him worthily, and how greatly thou art bound to correspond by faithful service towards Him Who confers such a favour upon thee. Cry out with admiration at the wisdom and love of God; cast thyself at His feet, rendering Him a thousand thanks for it, and offering thyself to His service.

Third Point.—Consider the ingratitude and negligence of men, who, being invited by the Lord, not as on former occasions, to carry the cross, or to do penance, nor to the trials entailed in the observance of His holy law, but to a most sweet and delectable banquet, yet excuse themselves from attending it, as the guests of the Gospel excused themselves from coming to the supper, neglecting this most heavenly manna for the savourless and worthless viands of the world. Weep before the Lord at this blindness, and entreat two things of Him: first, to hold thee by the hand, and not to permit thee to fall into the like; secondly, to have pity on these worldlings, and to send them preachers and teachers who shall enlighten and undeceive them with the light of His doctrine, and attract them to His table, and thereby to His service.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the householder called in the poor instead of the rich, and filled his table with guests who partook of his supper, each one of those who had excused themselves being replaced by many others. Wherein thou shouldst consider how the schemes and decrees of God are always accomplished, and how every

one who abandons Him is replaced by an abundance of others, and do thou correspond to the call of God and accomplish His will, lest another fill thy place, and enjoy the crown prepared for thee. Ponder how great would be thy loss if thou didst forfeit it, and how little God needs thee, Who has thousands better than thee to put in thy place, and to reward with the prize destined for thee.

SIXTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE GUESTS WHO EXCUSED THEMSELVES FROM COMING
TO THE SUPPER.

First Point.—Consider what were the excuses made by the guests who came not to the supper, and what the chastisement with which they were punished. The first excused himself because he had bought a farm or land, and must needs go to see it ; whereby are described those who are prevented from coming to this heavenly table and banquet by the enjoyments of property and of the perishable wealth of this world, who prefer earthly things to heavenly ones, and their property to Holy Communion and the welfare of their souls. Consider how greatly in error these are, and how deceived they will find themselves to have been, when, the drama of this life being over, they discover their poverty and nakedness, and find how great a good they have lost, which might have been theirs, had they but approached this table and banquet of the Lord. Weep over their loss, and be warned by the fate of others, lest, blinded by the greed of temporal wealth, thou also neglect heavenly concerns.

Second Point.—The second guest said he had bought five yoke of oxen, and must needs go and try them, and so could not come. Oh, blindness of the sons of Adam ! who for the sake of a few vile cattle abandon the table of

the Most High! These are they who, for the sake of avariciously labouring to amass wealth, neglect Holy Communion, and conceive it to be sufficient excuse for neglecting God that they are so employed, and thus they end by losing all; they lose God, because they abandon Him; and their wealth, because they succeed not, and it melts in their hands. Derive hence fresh light for thy soul, and a firm resolution to seek first God and spiritual things and the profit of thy soul, confident that thou wilt thus the better secure thy interest, and that thou wilt obtain from the Lord both spiritual and temporal advantage.

Third Point.—Consider the third excuse given by him who said that he had married a wife, and so could not come; in which the Redeemer describes the impediment found by many who abandon Holy Communion in order to give themselves to sensual and carnal pleasures and to vices, which are the great opponents of this heavenly food. Consider the purity of soul and body which is required for Holy Communion, since, when Achimelech fed the soldiers of David with the bread from the table of proposition, which figured the Sacred Host, he required that they should be chaste and pure, having abstained from intercourse even with their own wives. And yet sensual men deliver themselves up in such wise to the inordinate appetites of the flesh, that they hesitate not for their sake to deprive themselves of the Bread of Life. Oh, most lamentable blindness, over which we might well weep with tears of blood! That men should exchange life for death, the bread of angels for that of brute animals, and heavenly delights for sensual pleasures. Weep over the perdition of so many whom this vice carries away, and ask of God to hold thee by the hand, in order that it overcome not thy weakness. Withdraw from all occasions thereof, and study carefully to acquire and to preserve the purity of thy soul and body, in order that thou mayst be worthy to approach this heavenly table.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the Gospel tells us that the householder was angry with those who excused themselves, because before God false excuses are of no avail. He knows the secret intentions, and that these persons could, without forfeiting their property or foregoing their wives, employ themselves in His service. Consider how often He has called thee, and how many times thou hast excused thyself from coming to serve Him, depriving thyself of His holy table, and leaving that food for others. Learn, then, to despise what is earthly in order to acquire that which is heavenly; abandon the world in order to deserve this Divine Food; forsake the feasting of men and the table of the world for that of Christ and for the banquet of His Body, in which thou wilt find all sweetness and all manner of delights that thou canst desire.

SIXTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE INVITATION THAT CHRIST ADDRESSES TO US IN
THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

First Point.—Consider how, according to the Gospel of St. Luke, Christ said that many were called to the supper, and yet we are only told of three who excused themselves. Wherein thou mayst perceive the grief caused to Him by those who refuse to come to His table; for three appeared to Him a great many, and in each one that failed Him He seemed to miss a million. Discern therein the desire that the Lord has of attracting mankind to this banquet, and how grieved He is by those who excuse themselves from approaching Holy Communion. Endeavour then to give Him pleasure in this, first in thine own person, by preparing thyself to receive it worthily; and secondly, in that of thy neighbour, urging

all to this heavenly banquet by thy example, prayers, and exhortations.

Second Point.—Consider the great goodness and compassion of God, Who wearies not of calling and attracting men to the enjoyment of His delights, although they despise them, but the first guests having excused themselves from coming to His supper, He sends His servants to call many others to come and partake thereof. Oh, immense bounty of God, Who shuts not the door of His clemency on account of our offences, but rather opens it yet wider and calls more persons to His table when some despise and offend Him. Draw hence motives for blessing and praising God for His infinite mercy and patience, and a lesson not to let thine be exhausted by the ingratitude and injuries thou mayst receive from thy neighbour, but to be the more generous and pitiful towards others in proportion as they correspond less towards thee, expecting thy recompense from the Lord, and doing good solely for His love and to accomplish His Will.

Third Point.—Consider how, instead of calling the rich, He called the poor, the sick, and the despised of this world, because God accepts not the person of man, neither does He regard the exterior of the body but the interior of the soul. Ponder how in His presence neither the soul of the nobleman nor that of the rich man is preferred on account of his nobility or wealth to that of the peasant or of the beggar, but each one is valued according to his virtues, and oftentimes God prizes more that of the poor and despised of the world, because it is more submissive to His law, than that of the rich and esteemed, whose life is perchance not in accordance therewith, as we witness in this Gospel the rich despising His call and invitation whilst the poor obeyed and came at the first summons. Draw hence great light not to allow thyself to be blinded by the splendour of nobility nor by the opulence of worldly wealth, but to have regard to virtue, and to esteem men in proportion as they practise it. Learn to prize that which God values,

to despise what He despises, and to take more account of interior virtue than of exterior appearance, which is mere tinsel.

Fourth Point.—Consider what sort of punishment was inflicted on those who despised the banquet and refused to attend it: “I say to you, that none of those men that were invited shall taste of My supper;” because the Lord chastises those who abandon it by depriving them of all taste and relish for spiritual things, permitting that they shall become to them savourless and wearisome, and that they shall abandon them and be lost, which is the greatest punishment He can inflict. Humble thyself in His presence, and entreat Him to chastise thee in a fatherly manner, and not so rigorously as to withdraw from thee all devotion and relish for heavenly things. Resolve in His presence not to neglect prayer, nor Holy Communion, nor penance, nor the Word of God, for any earthly consideration, lest God chastise thee by withdrawing from thee all relish for them.

SIXTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT AS A SACRIFICE.

First Point.—Consider the excellence of this sacrifice and the sublime worth of this holocaust offered on the altar, which is the same as that which was offered on the cross, namely, not of animals or birds, as in the ancient sacrifices, but the very Son of the living God abiding in the sacrament for our love. And so great is that love in Him, that, not content with offering Himself once on the altar of the cross, He offers Himself daily in an unbloody manner by the hands of priests on many altars and in many places, with the same love as on the first occasion, in an acceptable sacrifice to His Eternal Father for

mankind. Let such intense charity ravish thy heart, and such immense and burning love steal away thy soul. Enter into the breast of that Lord, and contemplate what passes therein, when, being glorious in heaven, He comes to offer Himself a holocaust and sacrifice on earth. Offer thy soul and thy life, thy body and thy blood, in sacrifice to God with this holy sacrifice, in order that its virtue may supply what is wanting to thy works and render them acceptable to God.

Second Point.—Consider how, in virtue of the words of the priest, Christ our Lord comes down from heaven and abides sacramentally in the host and in the chalice. And the bread ceases to be bread and the wine is no longer wine, but both are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ, representing His Death in this manner, that, as they were separated during the three days of His Death, so also on the altar they should appear separate in the power of those words. Consider how willingly Christ offers Himself in this host to suffer again for thy sins, and in order to recall to thy mind His Passion and Death. Whence thou shouldst derive sentiments of love and gratitude, and an increased esteem for His Blood and a desire of always bearing in mind His Passion, in order to serve Him; and offer thyself to die for His sake Who gave Himself for thine.

Third Point.—Remember that a sacrifice is offered either for satisfaction, impetration, or in thanksgiving for benefits received. Consider how this most Divine Sacrifice has all these conditions in an eminently more perfect degree than all other sacrifices, for it is infinitely more satisfactory than any other on account of the infinite value of the gift offered. Ponder how much thou owest to God on account of thy sins, and how poor and powerless thou art to satisfy for them; and how Christ, moved by His immense charity, has resolved to give His Blood in this sacrifice to pay thy debts and atone for them and for those of all the world, for its value is infinite. Behold how bound thou art to serve Him eternally. This sacri-

fice is likewise impetratory, because no one can better incline the heart of God to mercy towards men than His own Son, and thus thou hast no more efficacious means of obtaining favours from His hand than by offering to Him this most holy and agreeable sacrifice ; for as St. Paul says, He Who has given us His Son, how can He refuse us what we ask for in His name and by His merits !

Fourth Point.—Consider the delight with which the Eternal Father accepts this sacrifice, and what rejoicing it occasions in the heavenly court ; how the angels descend to assist the priest at the altar whilst he offers it, and to carry it and present it to the Eternal Father on the sublime altar of glory. Consider the esteem, awe, and reverence with which it is gazed on, adored, and venerated by the angelic spirits and all the celestial court ; and if it has been revealed to us that some saints have been received in heaven with indescribable rejoicings, what must not be the jubilation with which this Divine Lord in the Blessed Sacrament is welcomed when He enters the court of His Father ? And thus St. Thomas says that this offering of Christ is called the Mass from the Latin *a mittendo*, because the Eternal Father sends Him to us to be our Redeemer, and we offer Him back again by the hands of the priest as a sacrifice of praise, in satisfaction for our sins, and to implore fresh graces. From all which thou shouldst draw for the profit of thy soul, first, with what devotion, attention, and reverence thou shouldst assist at the Holy Mass in the company of the heavenly courtiers. Secondly, how thou shouldst hear it, offering this Divine Sacrifice to the Eternal Father together with the priest, for the living and the dead, and especially for the necessities of the Church, for the welfare of all, and thine own in particular, and for all those who have been recommended to thy prayers. Thirdly, how thou shouldst prepare thyself to receive Holy Communion worthily, and with what gratitude, humility, and respect thou shouldst comport thyself afterwards, and what thanks thou shouldst render, in imitation of the angels of heaven.

Entreat the Lord to grant thee grace for all this, and He will bestow it on thee, and will instruct thee therein as the Master and Father of thy soul.

SIXTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE PRINCIPAL VIRTUES TAUGHT US BY CHRIST IN THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR.

Meditate to-day the virtues which Christ manifests and teaches in this Holy Sacrament, which is a compendium of all the wonders that He wrought in His mortal life. Ponder them one by one for thy profit.

The first is obedience, both to His Eternal Father who sends Him, and to the priest whose voice He obeys most punctually, coming at once when he pronounces the words at that time and place, without delay of any kind, God obeying thus the voice of man, and in a thing so arduous as to come down to be sacrificed in the Host for mankind. Isaac once ascended the mountain with his father to be sacrificed, without knowing for what purpose, and this obedience was esteemed so great that we are never tired of admiring and extolling it, and no reward appears excessive for such high merit. What then must be the merit of the obedience of Christ in this sacrifice, Who comes down from heaven at the voice of a priest, however bad he be, and places Himself voluntarily in his hands in order to be sacrificed, knowing and understanding for what purpose He comes, with extreme promptitude and alacrity, and this not once, but numberless times each day in all parts of the world where Mass is said. Verily words fail to extol it, and therefore is it left to the contemplation of the faithful. Meditate on this obedience, and learn to obey thy Creator and Lord.

The second virtue that Christ here teaches is the

charity and love He bears towards men, coming down to die mystically for them, without having any need of them, but solely for their good, as we have seen in the preceding meditations with St. Paul. And He carried the delicacy of this love to so high a degree that He laid down His life, and daily offers it, not for His friends alone, but likewise for His enemies, which is the proof of most perfect charity, and this that thou shouldst learn to do good, not only to thy friends, but likewise to the enemies who offend and injure thee.

The third virtue is mercy, shedding His blood liberally for all without distinction, and succouring the needs of all with sublime pity, and with as much delight for each one as He shed it for all on the altar of the cross.

The fourth virtue is humility, hiding His greatness beneath the veil of the sacramental species, and dwelling in the poor abodes of sinners, because they could not receive Him corporally if He came to them in the form He had whilst on earth. The Saviour Himself deigned to manifest this to a holy monk by changing the Host on the paten into a lovely infant, and again hiding Himself beneath the appearance of bread in order that he might receive Him.

The fifth virtue is meekness and patience in the midst of the insults He endures from heretics as well as from bad priests and sinners, who receive Him unworthily and treat Him with contempt. And although He could most easily punish them, and avenge the injuries done Him, yet He suffers them silently with admirable patience, in order to give thee an example of that which thou shouldst exhibit when wronged.

The sixth virtue taught us is peace, concord, and brotherly love towards all, without any distinction and avoiding all dissensions; for Christ unites Himself intimately with those that receive Him, in order that all may be one in Him, and be bound together with the bond of love and fraternal charity. For which reason, as St. Peter Damian tells us, the priest in the Mass turns round

and salutes the people, and the people return his salutation, in order to show that they are at peace with one another, and are united in the bond of fraternal charity, as this Holy Sacrament teaches us and requires of us. And St. Austin affirms that Christ chose to institute this sacrament beneath the appearance of bread and wine, because the former is made of many grains ground together, and the latter of the juice of many grapes pressed together, and both are thus symbolical, and teach us the union and charity which should unite us one with another, as Christ teaches us in this Sacrament.

The seventh is the virtue of perseverance, remaining in the sacramental species as long as they endure, never failing therein whatever may befall. Wherein He teaches us to persevere in virtue and in His holy service, in spite of whatever contradictions we may encounter, never drawing back one step from what we have undertaken.

These and many other virtues does Christ teach us in this Divine Sacrament, which thou should contemplate and meditate with gratitude to Him for having come down from heaven and having made a pulpit of the altar, in order to teach us the road to heaven. And with the humility of a disciple endeavour to learn of so great a Master, with the desire of imitating Him and the resolution of practising what He teaches thee for the welfare of thy soul.

SIXTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

TO SERVE AS PREPARATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

Although the preceding meditations can be made use of in order to prepare with fervour for the reception of the Blessed Sacrament, and likewise for thanksgiving after having received, it seems fitting to add here the two following ones, drawn from what St. Luke tells us

about Zacheus in the 19th chapter of his Gospel, to serve especially as preparation before and thanksgiving after Holy Communion.

First Point.—Consider how, when Christ was passing through Jericho, Zacheus, who was a rich man, and the chief of the publicans, desired extremely to see and converse with Him, and sought most diligently to do so. In which he teaches thee the first disposition thou shouldst have in order to receive this Lord worthily into thy house, namely, the desire of receiving Him. For the bread that we eat when hungry does us good, wherefore thou shouldst enliven thy faith and knowledge of this Lord, and thereby thy appreciation of His person, and of the favour He does thee, and awaken in thy soul lively desires of receiving Him and of enjoying that favour.

Second Point.—Consider the efforts that Zacheus made, of which the first (he being short of stature) was to climb up a high tree in order to see Christ. This frondiferous tree, St. Ambrose tells us, is a type of the vanity and pride of this world, which is the root of so many vices, which it is needful we should trample under foot as Zacheus did, purifying our consciences from all sin in order to receive Christ. Zacheus was small of stature and wealthy, which teaches us that he who would receive Christ should be little by humility and rich in virtue. Here enter into thine own conscience and examine it carefully, cleansing it from all imperfection, watering it with tears of contrition, and adorning it with virtues, in order that it may become a worthy dwelling-place for the Lord.

Third Point.—Consider the attention, delight, and devotion with which Zacheus gazed on Christ, without being disturbed by the great multitude of people that were assembled to see the Saviour, or prevented by his small height, all of which obstacles he overcame in order to see our Lord, and thereby he deserved that Christ should look on him and call him from amongst the crowd. Wherein thou hast instruction concerning what thou hast

to do before receiving Holy Communion, namely, to gaze on the Lord that thou desirest to receive with the eyes of meditation and contemplation, recollecting thyself in prayer without allowing thyself to be disturbed by the multitude of secular concerns nor by the society of men. Consider Who this Lord is Who is about to enter thy house, and who thou art that receivest Him. Ponder His greatness beside thy lowliness, and thine unworthiness in the presence of His majesty. Behold Him in heaven adored by the angels on the throne of His greatness, and see the narrowness of thy humble abode so unworthy of so great a Lord. Entreat Him to prepare thee by His grace, and to send the angels who have charge of His household, that they may adorn and decorate thy poor dwelling in such manner as to render it a fit abode for Him to enter.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ, “looking up,” saw Zacheus, and called him, commanding him to come down quickly, because He wished to enter into his house, and Zacheus obeyed the word of the Lord, and descended in haste and received Him into his house. Wherein thou hast further instruction how to prepare to receive Him into thine, namely, by showing obedience and diligence in His service, enkindling thy fervour, and not approaching to receive Him except in obedience to His will, manifested to thee through thy spiritual director. Weep over thy tepidity, and beg of God our Lord to grant thee the fervour of spirit and the burning love with which the greatest saints have received Him here on earth, and with which they love, adore, and worship Him in heaven; and approach with awe and reverence to receive Him under thy poor roof, acknowledging how unworthy thou art of so great a favour.

*SEVENTIETH MEDITATION.**For the Saturday.*

TO SERVE AS THANKSGIVING AFTER HOLY COMMUNION.

First Point.—Consider how St. Luke says that Zacheus received the Redeemer into his house, “gaudens,” with intense joy and delight at beholding therein the Saviour of the world, and having the opportunity of serving and honouring Him Whom he held himself unworthy to gaze on. This is the first thing thou shouldst do after communicating, to rejoice with the Lord, and to make good use of the time during which He remains within thy house; behold Him glorious, accompanied by the angels and seraphim, courted and praised by all the celestial court, and rejoice to see so great a Lord in thy poor abode.

Second Point.—Consider how St. Luke says that Zacheus remained standing with extreme reverence in the presence of the Saviour, giving thanks for the favour He had done him, and offering himself to His service. Thou shouldst do the like, prostrating thyself at His feet, giving thanks to Him for having deigned to enter under thy roof, entreating Him to confer fresh graces upon thee, offering Him the gratitude and praises of the heavenly court and of all creatures, and desiring to have countless tongues wherewith to praise and bless Him eternally.

Third Point.—Zacheus rendered account of his manner of life to the Lord, and it is probable that it was not a mere relation of his occupations, but that he took counsel with Him, and asked for guidance and grace in order to direct his steps towards heaven. Thou shouldst do the very same, exposing to Christ all thy actions, desires, and intentions, asking for light to direct thy life aright, and for grace to execute His will, and not to depart in the least thing therefrom. Show Him all thy wounds as to

the Physician of thy soul, and beseech Him to cure them : acknowledge thy faults to Him as to thy Judge, and entreat Him to pardon thee. Declare thy needs to Him as to thy King, and implore Him to succour thee. Present thyself before Him as the lost sheep that seeks its shepherd. Weep over thy past errors, and beseech Him to carry thee to His fold, and to receive thee back into His flock. Gaze on His wounds, and caress them, giving Him thanks for all that He has suffered for thee, and implore Him to shelter thee within them, where thou wilt find security, sweetness, strength, courage, and devotion.

Fourth Point.—Consider those words of Christ, “This day is salvation come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham ;” in which the Saviour manifests that He had done Zacheus honour because he was a son of Abraham, and to his house because of his merits. For God confers favours on many through those who devoutly receive Him into their souls : wherein thou art tacitly taught to ask favours for thy household. Be not backward in asking whilst Christ is thy guest ; open thy lips, and beg of Him to grant favours to thee, to all thy belongings, and to all who have been recommended to thy care. Pray for the necessities of the Church, and for the sins of the whole world ; pray for the faithful and the unfaithful ; and as Christ said that He was come to save what was lost, beseech Him not to forget thee, and to bring back to His service all those who have strayed therefrom ; and since thou dost not deserve to be heard, entreat Him at least to be moved, by the merits of thy spiritual Fathers, and of the Blessed Virgin, and all the saints, to grant thee what thou dost solicit :

*SEVENTY-FIRST MEDITATION.**For the Third Sunday after Pentecost.*

ON THE GOSPEL—(LUKE XV.)

The Gospel relates how the publicans and sinners coming to hear the teaching of Christ, the Scribes and Pharisees murmured thereat; and Christ repelled their attacks by the parable of the shepherd who left the ninety-nine sheep in the desert in order to seek one that was lost; and with that of the woman who had many groats, and yet sought for and found with joy one that she had lost; and He wound up by saying, "There shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance."

First Point.—Meditate with St. Ambrose the fervour of the publicans and sinners in hearkening to the word of God, and how they abandoned their gains and the worldly business they had on hand in order to come to Christ, preferring heavenly concerns to earthly ones, and those of the soul before those of the body. Draw from this consideration to do the like thyself, and not to allow thyself to be prevented by the occupations of this world from coming to Christ, but to employ thyself in amassing spiritual wealth, and in the welfare of thy soul, preferring always heavenly to earthly concerns, and what is eternal to what is perishable and unenduring.

Second Point.—Consider the benignity with which the Saviour welcomed sinners; for He not only taught them, listened to their doubts, and showed them the way to heaven, but He also entered into their houses, and sat at their tables, and eat with them, which is the extreme of kindness and friendliness, and the greatest proof of affection that He could give them. Praise and extol the bounty and mercy of the Saviour, and the humility with which He welcomes the guilty; and do not thou despise any one as a sinner, for, as thou seest, the Redeemer

seeks such, and esteems them when they approach Him and are converted. Excite in thyself great confidence in the Divine compassion, that He will welcome thee if thou approachest Him with a contrite heart, as He did the sinners of that time. Cry out and entreat Him to admit thee into His school, to pardon thy sins, and to direct thee on the road to heaven.

Third Point.—Consider how the Scribes and Pharisees murmured against the Lord because He received sinners and eat with them, and also against those that approached Him. Ponder how mistaken are the judgments of men, and how little they should be heeded, since they condemn as evil the mercy of God and the repentance of sinners. Raise thine eyes to heaven and note what is the judgment of God, which is the true criterion that appreciates each thing at its real value. Implore His grace not to be hasty in thy judgments, and entreat Him to put a curb on thy tongue that thou mayst not find fault with any one, least of all with those who draw near to Him.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ came forward to protect sinners against those who censured them, defending them with powerful reasoning, and avenging the honour of God; whence thou shouldst learn two things: First, great confidence in the Lord, which should determine thee to serve Him, and to rely on Him to defend thee from all thine enemies, as He defended the publicans who approached Him. Secondly, great courage to take up the defence of God's cause and that of His flock, whenever needful, against all who oppose them. Acquire strength and energy from the knowledge of His benignity; entreat His grace to be successful in His service. He will grant it thee, and thou wilt experience His protection.

SEVENTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE LOST SHEEP.

First Point.—The blessed St. Gregory says that the lost sheep is man, who lost heaven by sin; the ninety-nine sheep are the choirs of angels, who had no need of penance; the Shepherd is Christ, Who came down into the desert of this world to seek man and to bring him back to the fold of heaven. Wherein ponder, first, the immense compassion of God, Who, having no need of thee for anything whatsoever, left the heavens and came down to earth, submitted Himself to so many inconveniences, and endured so many labours in order to reclaim thee and restore to thee thy right to His glory. Cry out and say, with all the affection of thy heart, “Blessed be Thou, O Lord, for such great mercy; may the angels and all creatures praise Thee for the pity Thou hast manifested towards me, so unworthy thereof; grant me grace to be grateful for so great a favour.” Lay stress on the consideration of the obligation under which thou art thus placed, and ponder deliberately what thy duty is, and how and in what thou canst serve the Lord.

Second Point.—Consider the dangers incurred by a sheep which leaves the fold, abandons its shepherd, and wanders astray into the desert, exposed at each step to become the prey of wild beasts who would tear it to pieces, of falling down precipices, or of losing its life by drowning; and then turn thine eyes on thyself, and consider the dangers into which thou dost fall when thou separatest thyself from God and forsakest the fold of the just, how thou then wanderest astray and without guide, at the risk of falling at each step down a thousand precipices, or into the power of the infernal wolves, because of the many sins thou dost commit. Open thine eyes, and resolve forthwith to endure countless trials, in-

conveniences, mortifications, affronts, poverty, and scorn, and all the afflictions in the world, rather than forsake God. Entreat Him not to abandon thee, nor to withdraw His countenance from thee, nor to permit thee to wander one step from His fold, and away from those who abide under His protection and in His holy service.

Third Point.—Consider the Good Shepherd, who goes into the desert to seek the lost sheep at the cost of fatigue, exposure to the sun and the wind, enduring fatigues and sweats, all of which he considers to have been well endured when he finds the sheep; and taking it up with joy, he places it on his shoulder and brings it back rejoicing, the weight thereof being pleasurable to him, and the labour sweet, because he has found the sheep. Then consider the care that Christ our Lord has of seeking thee; behold what great fatigues thou hast cost Him; how many times thou hast escaped from His pursuit when He was following thee; what journeys, toils, and thorns He has endured, and how much blood He has shed for thee; and then with what delight of His soul did He find thee in the desert, and place thee on His shoulder to bring thee back to the fold, to that chosen fold of the angels of heaven. Reflect on thyself, and weep over the labour thou hast occasioned this Lord, and come in search of Him in order that He may have to seek thee no more. He bore His cross on one shoulder and the lost sheep on both, for thou hast cost Him greater fatigue than His cross, and He feels more acutely the loss of one soul that separates itself from Him by sin than all the sufferings He endured in His body during the Passion. Afflict Him no longer by thy sins; return to His flock; weep, bemoan, and ask pardon of Him for all thy past life, and solicit grace never more to sin.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ says that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner who does penance, than for ninety-nine just who have no need of penance. Behold how God values a sinner who repents, and give

this joy to God and to His angels, first, by doing penance for thine own sins ; and, secondly, by seeking sinners and bringing them back to the fold of the Lord at the cost of whatever labour, bearing all things joyfully in order to draw souls to God and reclaim them from the mire of their vices. Contemplate the Good Shepherd traversing rugged roads and rocks, deserts and forests, over thorns and brambles, in search of the lost sheep. Compassionate Him, and assist Him to seek for it. Let Him not go alone ; journey with Him ; leave thy comforts for the sake of the welfare of thy brethren ; and not only leave, as Christ did, the ninety-nine for the sake of one, but leave one for the sake of the ninety-nine that thou mayst draw to His service ; for certainly the number of lost sinners is greater than that of the just who serve Him. Remember all thou owest to the angels, and repay them by this service, causing them as many days of rejoicing as thou dost bring back sinners to God.

SEVENTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE LOST GROAT.

First Point.—What woman, says Christ, possessing ten coins, would not, if she loses one, seek it until it be found ? In which thou shouldst ponder how God values souls, and thine in particular, since He compares it to a precious coin, which is what men most highly esteem ; and the Saviour so valued it that He purchased it at the cost of His blood. Consider how little thou dost value thy soul, which thou dost sell to the devil at the vile price of some petty interest of pleasure or vainglory, which vanishes in a breath. Bewail thine errors in the presence of God, and most firmly purpose to die a thou-

sand deaths rather than to forfeit so precious a jewel as thy soul.

Second Point.—Observe the endeavours of this woman in order to find the lost coin—namely, she lit a candle, swept her house, and sought it diligently and perseveringly until she found it. Such are the means thou shouldst make use of in order to recover lost grace and therewith thy soul:—First, lighting the torch of consideration, and examining all the corners of thy conscience, scrutinising thy past life, acknowledging and weeping over thy sins. Secondly, sweeping them away by confession, leaving none behind that can stain thy soul. Thirdly, making haste to do good in satisfaction for the sins thou hast committed, in order by penance to render God propitious to thee. Set the seal to thy repentance by perseverance, ceasing not nor wearying until thou hast found the coin thou hadst lost, and hast adorned thy soul therewith. Ponder all this in the presence of the Lord, and solicit His grace in order to accomplish it, and to serve Him persistently to the end.

Third Point.—Consider the delight of the woman when she had found her lost treasure, which was so great that, not able to contain it within her own breast, she gave tidings thereof to her neighbours and relations. Ponder the joy a soul experiences when it escapes from sin and from eternal damnation and finds the precious pearl of grace, recovering thereby its right to the inheritance of heaven. Behold what joy a man condemned to death feels when his sentence is condoned and he recovers the life he had forfeited; and placing thy hand on thy breast, consider how, by sin, thou hast lost the grace of God, and art condemned to hell to endure eternal death; and that by repentance all this is reversed and thou recoverest thy right to the inheritance of glory, whereat thy soul should experience most intense delight. Draw hence high appreciation of grace and a most firm purpose of seeking it

and preserving it, at whatever cost of labours and fatigues, for no price can equal its value.

Fourth Point.—Consider how far the angels are from being envious, since they rejoice and make jubilee in heaven on account of the welfare of man, not because of temporal advantage, for of this they make no account, but because of the spiritual good of souls, which they further with all their power, assisting us, guarding us, succouring us, counselling us, and praying to God for us, and lastly, celebrating with jubilee our welfare. Take a lesson from them, and envy not the good of thy neighbours, but rather in all charity strive with all thy strength to assist them, especially in order to arise from sin, and rejoice with their joys, giving thanks to God for them.

SEVENTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE MERCY OF GOD AND THE FACILITY WITH WHICH HE FORGIVES SIN.

First Point.—Add to the foregoing meditations this one to serve as an epilogue and recapitulation of the previous ones, and consider first the inclination that God has to forgive sins and to do good to sinners, wherein shine forth His infinite pity and mercy ; for at all times and on all occasions when they turn to Him He pardons them with delight, receives them back into His favour, and makes them heirs of His kingdom. At whatever hour, He says, by the mouth of Ezechiel, a sinner weeps, I will so forget his wickedness as to remember it no more for ever. Ponder the infinite mercy of God, since even were the offences of the sinner more numerous than the grains of sand on the shore, and of greater magnitude than the highest mountains of the earth, yet as soon as he weeps with true contrition for having committed them, God at

once pardons and forgets them, and receives him back to His grace and friendship. O bountiful God, infinitely pitiful and merciful! blessed be Thy pity for all ages without end! Derive hence deep affections of confidence in God for obtaining the pardon of thy sins, and at the same time learn to forgive the injuries done thee, as God pardons those thou committest against Him.

Second Point.—Consider that God not only pardons easily those who, like Magdalen and the Prodigal Son, come to ask His forgiveness, but His mercy extends yet further, and goes forward to seek sinners, soliciting them with His grace and pardon, as He sought Matthew the publican, and Zacheus, and others of whom the Gospel tells us, whom He forgave and did favours to, and of whom the lost sheep sought by the shepherd and brought back on his shoulders is the type. Entreat the Lord to show the like pity towards thee, to seek thee and bring thee back to the fold whenever thou dost stray therefrom, and that as He has so great an inclination to pardon sinners, He will receive thee to His favour, now that thou approachest the door of His clemency. Cast thyself at His feet like Mary Magdalen, and beseech Him, as she did, with tears to pardon thy sins, and thou wilt obtain forgiveness from the Lord.

Third Point.—Consider what God requires from the sinner in order to forgive him, which is no more than a heartfelt “I have sinned!”—that is, repentance for the past, with the determination to amend in the future, and then, without further delay, the Lord forgives him. Put before thine eyes the example of David, who repented of his sin when admonished by the Prophet Nathan, and said, “I have sinned against the Lord;” and the prophet at once replied, “God has already pardoned thee.” As St. John Chrysostom observes, there was no interval between the repentance and the pardon, or between his avowal that he had sinned and the exercise of God’s mercy. Blessed for ever be that mercy! Amen. Truly the grace of God and the forgiveness of sins is a jewel of

so great value, that if we were required to perform all the penances, mortifications, pilgrimages, and punishments that can be imagined, we ought to accomplish them joyfully in order to secure it; how much more therefore should we willingly do what little is required of us in order to purchase so rich a jewel at so low a price. Give many thanks to God for having rendered the recovery of lost grace so easy to us, and for the facility with which He opens to us the doors of His mercy, and grants us the pardon of our sins. Weep over the negligence of men in seeking it, and since thou seest the door open, enter therein, and fail not to obtain the pardon of thy offences and grace for thy soul. Weep to think how diligently thou dost seek for earthly advantages, and how slow thou art to secure heavenly goods.

Fourth Point.—Consider that God not only forgives sins with the facility we have noticed above, but He at the same time bestows great favours on those who heartily repent; and besides admitting them to His friendship and making them heirs of heaven, He confers other favours upon them, as He did on St. Matthew, numbering him amongst His apostles, and to St. Mary Magdalen, lodging in her house, recalling to life her brother Lazarus when already four days dead, defending her against the murmurings of the Pharisees, &c. So completely does God forget the sins of penitent sinners, that He remembers them no more than if they had never been committed, and He considers repentant sinners to be His friends, and treats them as such. Let thy heart take courage from this liberality, and draw hence a firm resolution to love and serve so good a Lord, and to do good to those who injure thee.

*SEVENTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.**For the Thursday.*

ON THE INFINITE PERFECTION OF GOD.

First Point.—Consider how Christ our Redeemer commands us to be perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect. Wherefore it is needful to contemplate and meditate the infinite perfection of God, and aspire to imitate it in all things, as far as we are able, with the assistance of His divine grace. Consider, then, first, how God is most perfect in Himself, there being no perfection in which He is or can be wanting, neither can there be any imperfection in Him, and this of Himself, and because of His infinite goodness, which He receives from none other, neither does He depend on another for its preservation in all its sublime elevation, which far exceeds anything that we can conceive. Contemplate this abyss of infinite bounty, this wide field of boundless extent, this light inaccessible, and marvel and rejoice that God is what He is. Draw hence tender affections of love and praise, and a desire to preserve thy soul and all thine actions from the smallest stain of defect, and to perform all thy works with the utmost possible perfection, in order to imitate as far as thou canst the sublime perfection of God.

Second Point.—Consider how all the perfections of creatures exist in God in the highest degree, without number or limit; for all that exists in God is God, infinite and incomprehensible as His own being; and not only does He embrace within Himself the perfection of all creatures, but all of them receive whatever perfection they possess from Him. Contemplate that immeasurable, most profound, and inexhaustible ocean of divine perfections, whence flow like streams and arise as vapours all the perfections, beauty, greatness, intelligence, wisdom, power, bounty, liberality, &c., which are distributed

amongst all creatures, all of which together are no more than as a drop in comparison with the ocean of God's perfection. Rapt with admiration at His immense goodness and perfection, cease not from praising Him ; and at the same time entreat Him, as He fills all things, not to leave thee alone empty, but to communicate to thee some share of His immense goodness and exalted perfection.

Third Point.—Consider in particular the various perfections, both corporal and spiritual, possessed by creatures. Contemplate the beauty of the sun, the moon, and the stars ; the magnitude of the heavens, the transparency of the air and of the water ; the order of the universe, the beauty and fragrance of flowers, the fecundity of trees and animals, the intelligence of man, the wisdom and perfection of the angels, and whatever goodness is to be found in created things. Arise thence to the contemplation of the perfection of the Most High ; imagine an aggregate assemblage of all these and other infinite perfections, and yet thou wilt not arrive at comprehending the extent of the perfection of God. Humble thyself with the angels before His throne, acknowledging thyself to be no greater than an ant, less than a little fly, and a most vile thing in comparison with Him ; and then see how thou hast dared to offend Him, and how far thou art from loving Him and serving Him as thou shouldst. Abase thyself in His presence with these thoughts, marvelling at His greatness, at His goodness and patience, that He should permit thee, so vile a worm, to love and to serve Him ; and that He, being so infinitely exalted above thee, should yet exhort thee to imitate Him.

Fourth Point.—Having considered all this, and how God embraces all possible perfections in Himself, without the smallest taint of imperfection, turn thine eyes on the folly of man ; weep over his blindness and thine own, that, neglecting the supreme good, they should descend to creatures who are so imperfect, and that,

carried away by a phantom of delight and beauty, they should abandon the real and supreme perfection of the omnipotent God. Bewail thy blindness, ask pardon for thy error, and say, with St. Austin, "Deus meus et omnia,"—Thou art my God and my all; in Thee I possess all things in the utmost perfection. My soul desires nothing but Thee; hold me by the hand in order that I may not be blinded or deceived by the world, or by aught that glitters therein. Give light, O Lord, to all men, in order that they may know Thee, seek Thee, and despise all earthly things for Thy sake.

SEVENTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE INFINITE GOODNESS AND SANCTITY OF GOD.

First Point.—Consider that God is infinitely good and holy, because He unites in Himself all virtues, all goodness and sanctity, in the highest degree, and in the most exalted perfection imaginable; and this goodness and holiness He receives from none other than His own Being, which is infinite, incomprehensible, and eternal, having no beginning; for He always was, He is, and He will be for ever. Contemplate this supreme goodness and most perfect sanctity, which can never admit of any sin, stain, or imperfection; wherefore Christ said,¹ "None is good but One, that is, God;" and the Church daily repeats it, saying, "Thou alone art holy," because He alone possesses holiness of Himself, and in an eminent degree, whilst that of all others is derived from Him. Admire this infinite goodness, and unite thy voice with those of the seraphim to bless and praise Him, saying, "Holy, holy, holy!" rejoicing that He is holy for all ages without end.

¹ Mark x. 18.

Second Point.—In order the better to appreciate this infinite goodness of God, descend to the contemplation of creatures, and ponder how all the goodness they possess is derived from that fountain and ocean of infinite sanctity, and that all their perfections and goodness, whether of the natural, of the moral, or of the supernatural order, are as nought in comparison with the perfection of God, and less than a grain of sand in regard of the universe, mixed as they are with the dross of so many imperfections, blemishes, and sins. Blush to perceive how often thou hast abandoned God, the supreme and infinite good, for His creatures, so imperfect, and fit only to be trodden under foot, of which the best are most vile in comparison with Him; and beg pardon with a most firm determination not to allow thyself to be deceived henceforth, but to despise all creatures, all for His love.

Third Point.—Consider how this infinite goodness of God is not liable to variation or decrease, as is that of His creatures, but is immutable and enduring, without diminution or end. The angels, although so holy, are capable of change, as holy Job affirms; and if God withdrew His supporting arm from them, they might forfeit their holiness; and much more is this true of men, as we daily witness; but with God holiness is a part of His very essence, and as He can neither fail nor change, so neither can His goodness be subject to variation. Draw hence the esteem that thou shouldst have of the goodness and holiness of God, and a firm resolution to love and serve Him, relying not on fickle creatures, but on His goodness as on an immovable foundation, endeavouring to imitate the divine sanctity by perseverance in good without change or diminution, aspiring to be holy and perfect, and taking for thy standard the holiness and sanctity of God.

Fourth Point.—Consider the infinite purity and sanctity of God, and how it manifests itself in all His works, in which shine forth those two sorts of holiness and justice

of which David speaks when he says,¹ "Decline from evil, and do good;" for God never ceases to do good, nor is His holiness inactive, and He does all things with the utmost perfection, never declining towards any evil whatever, nor suffering any blemish of imperfection, but always doing good. Oh, my soul! that thou didst learn from such a Master, and wouldst see thyself in this mirror, not suffering virtue to lie dormant within thee, but exercising it in the service of God, and this always well and perfectly, flying from all sin and imperfection more than from death itself.

SEVENTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

HOW GOD IS WORTHY OF LOVE IN HIMSELF AND LIKEWISE
BECAUSE OF HIS BENEFITS.

First Point.—Consider that if what is good deserves love, because, as Aristotle teaches, goodness captivates the will, God, being infinitely good, as has been said, is likewise infinitely amiable, and He alone can love as He deserves to be loved, and all our love falls short of His desert. Consider how wanting thou hast been in love of Him, and how far thou art from corresponding with thy will to what He deserves from thee, occupying thyself with creatures, and neglecting the Creator. The reason of this is that thou dost not gaze on Him, or contemplate, or know Him as thou shouldst, occupied as thou art with visible and transitory things. Blush to have abandoned the supreme good for the sake of this vile world, and raising thine eyes from earth to contemplate the infinite sanctity of God, solicit light to know Him, and the fire of divine love wherewith to love Him.

Second Point.—Consider how He is loved by the angels and archangels, by the cherubim and seraphim, inflamed

¹ Ps. xxxvi.

with His love as iron in the furnace is penetrated with fire. Ponder how He is loved by the saints in heaven, who know Him by the clear vision of His essence and goodness; what ineffable delight they experience in loving Him, and how far they are from being preoccupied with creatures, their hearts and souls being wholly wrapt up in their Creator. Entreat them to teach thee to love Him, and to give thee one spark of that fire with which they burn, in order to enkindle and consume thy heart in His love, and to purify it from all dross of affection for creatures. And beseech the Lord Himself to enlighten thee with the light of His knowledge, and to render thee worthy of His Divine love.

Third Point.—In order to inflame thy heart with the love of God, consider, first, how much He loves thee, and as love can only be repaid by love, how great is that which thou owest in return for such immense charity; and, secondly, that His love for man is not that of goodwill only, but that He constantly manifests it in His works, communicating Himself to all. Contemplate the goodness and beauty which are possessed by creatures, and which God communicates to them for thy sake; and then consider how He communicates Himself to men, and especially to thee, since, besides the innumerable benefits that thou receivest continually from His hand, both for thy body and thy soul, He so loved thee as to give His own Son for thy redemption. Ponder how this Son communicates to thee His Soul, His Body, His Blood, and His Divinity, in the most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, and leaves no stone unturned in order to secure thy welfare and salvation, till at last He communicates Himself to thee in heaven by the beatific vision, giving thee the possession of His very essence, and therein the sovereign good which contains all good, and making man like unto Himself. O Divine Lord! what can I render Thee for so many and such great benefits? With what love can I love Thee for such supreme love? In what manner can I give my whole self to Thee in return for such great

mercies? I confess my poverty, I bewail my impotence, that I cannot succeed in loving and serving Thee as I ought. I offer Thee the love that the angels bear Thee, and that wherewith Thou lovest Thyself, to supply what my poverty lacks.

Fourth Point.—Consider the tenderness with which God loves thee and does good to thee, namely, for no interest or profit of His own, but only for thine, seeking thy welfare in all His works. Whence thou shouldst draw affections of tenderest charity, loving and serving God with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, for His honour and glory, without ever regarding thine own interest, and if need be, sacrificing thy honour and life and all thou dost possess for His love, and in order that He may be honoured and glorified by all. Prostrate thyself at His feet, and offer thyself disinterestedly to His service, beseeching Him from thy heart to give thee His grace in order that thou mayst love and serve Him as thou shouldst.

SEVENTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Fourth Sunday.

ON THE GOSPEL—(LUKE V.)

St. Luke tells us that a great multitude being assembled to hear the teaching of our Saviour, He went into the bark of St. Peter and preached to them, and afterwards He sailed away with the disciples, who letting down their nets at His bidding, caught a great number of fishes, whereat they greatly marvelled, and St. Peter casting himself at the Saviour's feet acknowledged himself to be a sinful man, but Christ raised him up and comforted him; and the disciples, leaving all things, followed Christ.

First Point.—Consider the thirst and fervour of that crowd in coming to hear the word of God; for they

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followed our Lord, not only on land, but by water, and in all places, leaving their homes and their families, regardless of inconvenience, that they might receive from His lips the solid and substantial food of their souls. Learn from these men to seek nourishment for thine, and witnessing their example, blush in the presence of God to behold how little thou dost thirst for the good of thy soul, and how much for that of thy body; with what facility thou dost neglect the former, and with what eagerness thou dost seek the latter, and beg of God grace to amend.

Second Point.—Consider the generous benignity with which the Saviour received and fed those who came to Him; for both on land and at sea and in all places He preached to them, taught them, and distributed to them heavenly food. Ponder what thirst and longing He had for the welfare of their souls, and entreat Him to have the like for thine. Go with all confidence to His school; He will teach thee the road to heaven, if thou wilt but learn it; and let his example teach thee never to deny thy assistance to thy neighbours in anything, but on the contrary to succour them on all occasions, and to spare no labour or care when needful for the welfare of their souls.

Third Point.—Consider how, having preached to the crowd, Christ set sail with His disciples, launched out into the deep and commanded them to cast their nets, and they drew out a very great quantity of fish. Wherein thou hast much to ponder; first, that Christ instructed the multitude from the borders of the lake, but His disciples on the high sea. Because, as St. Gregory says, spiritual persons require other food than that fitted for the generality, and thus Christ withdraws to the high sea with His disciples in order to give them higher teaching and more exalted instructions. Entreat the Lord to instruct thee according to thy capacity, and to give thee light and discretion when called upon to teach others, in order that thou mayst give nourishment to each according

to his wants. Secondly, ponder how He commanded them to cast their nets, teaching them that He required them to catch not fishes but men, as He afterwards explained to them. For the same work has He chosen thee; see whether thou fulfillest His holy will, and whether thou dost occupy thyself in winning thy brethren, or only in thy own temporal welfare and advancement. Open the eyes of thy soul. Consider further that Christ commanded the disciples to cast their net to the right of the ship, and by that means they secured so copious a draught. The right hand represents spiritual wealth and riches; the left hand, earthly ones. Observe on which side thou hast cast thy net until now, whether thou hast obeyed the injunction of Christ, and what has been the result of all thy labours, and thou wilt find that it has been nought, for all is vanity. Bewail thy past errors, and the loss thou hast sustained. Draw light from the teaching of Christ, cast thy net henceforth to the right hand, bestowing all thy care on what is for the service of God, and on spiritual concerns, and thou wilt secure a very copious draught of immortal treasures.

Fourth Point.—Consider the humility of St. Peter, for when most successful, and when deriving the greatest fruit from his labours, he did not attribute it to his own exertions, but to the grace of the Lord; and when most rich then was he most humble, throwing himself at the feet of Christ, and beseeching Him to withdraw from him because he was a great sinner. Oh, exalted virtue of the holy apostle! oh, heavenly lesson which teaches us not to be vain of the progress we make in virtue, and which we see ourselves to have achieved, but rather to humble ourselves the more, as the trees when most laden with fruit bend down to the earth. Enter into account with thyself, and behold the vanity of thy heart, how self-complacent and puffed-up thou art at the least good thou dost, as if it were the work of thine own strength and not of the power of God. Learn to humble thyself, as thou hast so much cause for doing; cast thyself with St. Peter

at the feet of Christ, and say to Him, "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am the most vile sinner in the world. Depart from me, lest the odour of my sins offend Thee, or the contagion thereof touch Thee; depart from me, for I merit not to be near Thee. But no; depart not, lest I be entirely lost; rather, as my Sovereign Physician, draw near to me, who am so infirm, to heal my wounds, and have mercy upon me. Approach me and cure my ills, for I am the greatest of sinners, and Thou camest down from heaven to seek sinners. Have mercy on me; have mercy on me, O Lord, according to Thy great mercy!"

SEVENTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL.

First Point.—Consider how, when the crowd came to hear the word of God, Christ went up into the ship of Peter and thence taught the multitude. He might easily have taught them from the shore, or have gone into another bark, but He chose that of Peter, because it was from that vessel that He was to give Catholic and true doctrine to the world. Render great thanks to God for this favour that He has done us; behold Him preaching and teaching from that boat, and derive from this discourse a high appreciation of the bark of Peter, and of the doctrine that Christ ever teaches us from it through the sovereign Pontiffs, successors of St. Peter, and by means of the doctors, preachers, confessors, and spiritual Fathers, who have the spirit of St. Peter. Be convinced in the presence of God that He teaches thee by their voice, and henceforth accept their words as though spoken by the Lord. Implore His grace to value them as such, and to put them in practice.

Second Point.—Consider how St. Luke says that Christ besought Peter to draw back a little from the land

that He might preach; in which thou hast to ponder two things: first, that He besought him—and the Evangelist does not say that He commanded him, although, as his superior, He might have done so—thus teaching us to be meek and humble in our words and manner of speaking, and instructing thee how thou shouldst behave towards thy inferiors, if thou be a superior, and still more towards thy equals, when thou hast to require something from them; secondly, that whereas preachers always desire to have their audience near to them, Christ sought to withdraw from His and from the earth, in order to teach us that, to produce fruit amongst men, it is needful to withdraw from familiarity with them, and not to associate overmuch with them, and still less with earthly concerns, but rather to retire from the things of earth, to launch out into the deep and sublime things of heaven, and to seek familiar intercourse with God. O my soul! that thou didst learn this lesson, and didst know how to set aside all that is earthly, and to fix thy mind on what is heavenly and divine; how greatly would it profit thee and thy neighbour! Implore this grace from God, and desist not from thy petition until thou hast obtained it from the Lord; thereby wilt thou secure a priceless store of virtue.

Third Point.—Consider how the disciples laboured all night alone and caught nothing, but in the daytime, and when in company with Christ, they caught so great a draught that it made up for all they had lost before; and this in order to teach us that it is lost labour for us to cast our net alone, and during the night of sin, for nothing is caught; but if we cast it when in company with Christ, and during the day, and clear light of His grace, we labour successfully, and great fruit is secured. O my soul! that thou wouldst learn this lesson in order to render thy labours profitable and to derive fruit therefrom. Harken to the words of St. Paul: What fruit hast thou derived from those past works which thou dost now acknowledge with shame? What hast thou gained

by all thy past anxieties when in the darkness of sin? Turn over a new leaf, abandon darkness, and labour no longer in the night of sin. Beg light from God, associate thyself with the Redeemer, depart not from His side; carry Him always with thee, and at each casting of the net thou wilt, by His grace, achieve immense results. Cast thyself at His feet, like St. Peter; entreat Him to assist thee, to teach thee, and rather to annihilate than abandon thee or withdraw His protection from thee.

Fourth Point.—Consider how St. Peter and the other disciples marvelled at beholding so copious a draught of fishes. Be thou also filled with wonder at the number of men whom, by the grace of God, they gathered throughout the whole world, drawing them out of the darkness in which they were plunged, and from the deep mire of their vices, bestowing the light of heaven on them, and subjecting them to grace. Beg of God not to be left in the mire of thy sins; beg to be drawn therefrom, and made one of the many who are journeying to heaven. O Lord! let me not be forgotten; ensnare me in Thy net, withdraw me from the immense ocean of my vices in which I am submerged; subject me to Thy protecting grace, and conduct me in Thy bark to the port of Thy glory.

EIGHTIETH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST AND HIS MANNER OF
TEACHING.

First Point.—Consider how St. Luke tells us that “*sitting* He (Christ) taught the multitudes out of the ship,” that is to say, leisurely and taking time, not hurriedly and hastily, as one who passes by. Draw hence a lesson how to instruct thy neighbours, not hastily but calmly, attending to their spiritual advancement with the

tenderness of true charity and desire of their profit, according to the example of Christ. Learn also, with regard to thine own soul, to occupy thyself leisurely and not hurriedly in the concerns of thy salvation and spiritual advancement. Consider how thou dost hurry over thy prayers, the Holy Mass, meditation, confession, communion, and all spiritual things, and how deliberately and slowly thou dost set about temporal, earthly, perishable, and worthless concerns. Bewail thy errors in the presence of God; beg pardon for them, and solicit grace to change thy conduct for the remainder of thy life.

Second Point.—Consider how the Gospel tells us that so many fishes were caught that the net broke. Wherein thou hast a lesson not to burden thyself with too many occupations, however good they may be, lest the net break and thou endanger whilst thyself assisting others. See and consider that well-ordained charity begins with one's self, and that thou dost not serve God by procuring the good of thy neighbour to thine own detriment. Ask prudence of God in order to employ thyself in works of charity, both spiritual and corporal, without causing injury to thine own soul; rather seek profit both to thy neighbour and to thyself.

Third Point.—Consider the wonder experienced by St. Peter and the other disciples at beholding so copious a draught of fishes, and how they all submitted themselves to Christ, and made the firm resolution of leaving father and mother, boats, nets, and all they possessed, and of following Him in poverty and nakedness. And blush before the throne of God to see how they submitted to Him at the first marvel that they saw Him perform, and thou dost not submit after so many that He has done and daily performs in thy sight. O Lord! how obstinate is my heart and how blind my eyes, that I never wholly submit to Thee, nor entirely break with the world, or renounce its honours, riches, and pleasures. Hold out Thy hand to withdraw me from its tyranny,

that I may despise and trample it under foot, and, like Thy disciples, may follow Thee poor and naked.

Fourth Point.—Contemplate how Christ teaches the world unceasingly from the vessel of His cross. Place before thyself the image of Christ crucified, and hearken to what He says to thee from that mainmast of the ship of St. Peter ; listen to the exhortations He addresses to thee of patience, of humility, of charity, of contempt of the world, of constancy, and of long-suffering in such a deluge of woes. And see how like a ship He himself ascends on the bitter waters that buffet Him, and goes out into the midst of the ocean of His sufferings. Contemplate what He suffers and how He suffers ; meditate on and slowly ponder His words, inscribe them on thy heart, and solicit grace and courage to put them into execution.

EIGHTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE DISCIPLES FISHING IN THE NAME AND BY THE
COMMAND OF CHRIST.

First Point.—Consider how the disciples, although such expert fishermen and so practically acquainted with that sea, laboured all night without any success, not catching a single fish ; but when they cast their net in obedience to Christ, they enclosed so large a number that they could not draw it in. This was in order to teach thee the power of obedience, and to convince thee that a single act performed at the command of a superior who holds the place of God, is of greater value than many performed out of self-will. Derive hence a very firm determination to be in all things directed by obedience to thy superior, be he who he may, and not by thy own will, and thou wilt secure great fruit from thy actions.

Second Point.—Consider how the disciples cast the net in the name of the Lord, saying, “We have laboured all the night and have taken nothing; but at Thy word I will let down the net.” And with the name of Jesus on their lips they cast it into the sea, and took a great draught. Draw hence what purity of intention thou shouldst have in all thy actions, directing them to the glory of God, and commencing none but in His name and for His holy service, and confide in His strength for the success of all thy works.

Third Point.—Consider how, on beholding the great draught they had enclosed, they called to those in the other ship, who came and helped them, and they filled both ships with the fish that the Lord gave them. Wherein thou hast two heads of instruction for thy soul. The first condemns envy, and teaches brotherly love, bestowing on thy neighbour a share in thy successes, and availing thyself of his strength and industry for the service of God. The second is to assist others with love and charity when they need thy help, as on this occasion the disciples aided one another, and thus did God favour them all; and thou mayest expect the like from the Lord if thou dost imitate them.

Fourth Point.—Meditate the last words of Christ to St. Peter, “Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.” Hearken, O my soul, to these words, as though addressed to thee by the mouth of the Saviour, and fear not to enter on whatever charge God may impose on thee, however exalted and difficult, for He will give thee grace and the talent necessary for its fulfilment. Fear not whilst Christ is at thy side, for He will carry thee in peace and safety through whatever enterprise thou mayest undertake at His command; lose not sight of Him and He will watch over thee; leave Him not and He will not abandon thee. Remember what occurred with Cæsar when the pilot who was conducting him across the sea, alarmed by the fury of the winds, grew afraid, and Cæsar encouraged him, saying,¹ “Ne timeas fortuna Cæsaris

¹ Plut. ejus vita.

tecum est,"—Fear not; thou bearest Cæsar and his fortunes. And what comparison is there between Cæsar and the Saviour? If the presence of Cæsar and of his good fortune comforted the pilot in well-known perils, how much more shouldst thou be encouraged by the presence of Christ and of His grace? Fear not; henceforth thou shalt catch men and draw them to God. Cast the net, as Christ enjoins; not the hook, as St. Bernard remarks, because therewith few are caught and that painfully; but with the net many are drawn in, and that so sweetly and gently that the fish imprisoned in the net are not aware of the fact until they are withdrawn from the water. Thus shouldst thou endeavour to draw men to God with all the sweetness, benignity, and meekness of Christ, by good doctrine and yet better example, and thou wilt catch a great draught. Meditate all this slowly; offer thyself to the Saviour for His service, and entreat His grace to persevere therein.

EIGHTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON SPIRITUAL PROGRESS.

First Point.—Consider in the fervour with which the crowd congregated to hear Christ and to profit by His doctrine the earnestness with which thou shouldst strive to advance in His service, according to thy state of life. Enter into account with thyself, and consider the means and opportunities afforded thee for progressing in His service, and how little fruit thou hast derived therefrom. Weep over thy tepidity, and beg of God to give thee His Holy Spirit in order that thou mayest serve Him with fervour.

Second Point.—Consider those words of Christ: "Duc in altum,"—"Launch out into the deep." Set sail, abandon

the earth, and take to the high sea. These words the Lord addresses to thee, admonishing thee to ascend to greater perfection, to arise from earthly passions, and from all that the world adores, and to ascend to the heights of the Spirit, and to the summit of perfection. Remain not always in the lowest class, but advance to higher things; break the bonds of worldly affections which prevent thee from progressing; extend the sails of thy heart to the favourable wind of the Holy Spirit; take courage to run to the summit of perfection, and to live with God and for God alone. Offer thyself forthwith courageously to what is most arduous and perfect. God will assist thee, and in a short time thou wilt advance much.

Third Point.—Meditate those words that the apostles addressed to Christ, “Master, we have laboured all the night and have taken nothing;” and consider in what thou hast spent thy strength and labour; and how little thou hast profited in the service of God, since thou canst in truth say, “I have laboured many years and gained nothing.” And seeing thy poverty, exert thyself to employ thy strength with greater fruit henceforth; examine the causes of thy shortcomings, and bewail them before God; entreat His pardon for thy negligence, and implore grace in order to make up in the future for what thou hast lost in thy past life.

Fourth Point.—Consider the very copious draught of fishes enclosed by the disciples through their obedience to Christ, and how they called their companions to aid them in their toil, and they came and helped them, and both the ships were filled with fish, securing thus great profit from their exertions. Ponder what fruit is derived from labouring in company with the virtuous, and from their exhortations, examples, and earnest labours, and draw thence desires of abiding in the society of the just, and of being assisted by their advice and examples, and of being animated by a holy emulation in the service of God. Behold the profit and progress made by others,

who in a short time have far outstripped thee, and excite thyself, with the aid of God, to serve Him better, and to outstrip all others.

EIGHTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON PURITY OF CONSCIENCE AND PERFECTION OF LIFE.

First Point.—Set before thyself a soul in the state of sin, and a soul in the state of grace. Consider attentively, and contemplate the difference that exists between the one and the other. The soul that is in a state of grace and friendship with God is beautiful and lovely as the angels of heaven, that which is in sin is hideous and abominable as the demons of hell. The soul that possesses grace enjoys great peace and interior tranquillity ; that which is in sin is pressed on all sides with fear and alarm, and suffers continual war within itself. The soul that possesses grace is the child of God and the heir of His glory, the hope of obtaining which fills it with joy and consolation whatever befalls. The soul that is in sin is disinherited from the kingdom of heaven and condemned to hell, into which it dreads to fall at each step. The former is in perfect repose, and the latter in great toil and continual anxiety ; the one heaps up treasures of good works for heaven, the other loses all. Contemplate these two states ; see which of the two thou wouldst choose for thy soul, and seek it at once with the grace of the Lord.

Second Point.—Consider in what this purity of soul consists, namely, in a conscience pure and free from all stain of sin. Such a soul admits no sin, however small, restrains, by the grace of God, all the inordinate inclinations of the flesh, subjects them to reason and to the Divine will, endeavours with all its power to unite itself

most perfectly with that will, desires and longs for naught but what God pleases and wills, adjusts itself in all things, and concerning all things, to His most righteous will, which is the aim of whatever it projects, decides, or executes. Think slowly over all this, contemplate this degree of perfection, and turning thine eyes on thyself, see how far thou art from having attained it, and how different thy life is from what it should be. Beg of God to give thee His most holy grace, in order to purify thy conscience from all imperfection, and to grant that, aspiring after what is most perfect, thy will may at last become most intimately united with His will.

Third Point.—Consider how agreeable this perfection of life is in the sight of God, of angels, and of men, and what glory is given to the Lord by those who aspire to this degree of perfection, since He says that His delight is to dwell with them, and that, as He revealed to the glorious St. Teresa of Jesus, He takes pleasure in souls adorned with the flowers of these virtues as in a paradise of delights. Strive with the grace of God to give Him this pleasure, and to draw Him into thy house by the fragrance of these flowers. Remember how often thou hast banished Him from thee by the bad odour of thy vices; cleanse thy conscience, adorn it with virtues, and thou wilt become a paradise for the Lord.

Fourth Point.—Contemplate in the presence of God what means thou shouldst use in order to acquire, preserve, and increase this perfection, namely, hatred of sin, an ardent desire of advancement, mortification of the flesh, silence towards men and prayer to God, withdrawal from earthly concerns and affection for heavenly ones, loving God above all things with most perfect charity, and fervently devoting thyself to the study of all virtues, beginning with self-contempt, and tending to perfect union with God. By these steps is the summit of perfection reached; God is on the ladder to lend His Hand to those who ascend it; entreat Him to extend It towards thee, with a firm confidence that He will do so, for He

denies His succour to none who strive to mount it. Take courage and ascend, for He will assist thee.

EIGHTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE PERFECTION TAUGHT BY THE LIFE OF THE
BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

First Point.—To-day being dedicated to the honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, our Lady, let us meditate on the example of perfection and sanctity which she gave to the world in the following points. First, consider the fervour of spirit with which she aspired to perfection. From the first instant of her most pure conception until the hour of her happy departure for heaven, she employed all her strength in achieving and increasing it by all possible means, obtaining grace from heaven and co-operating continually therewith, augmenting her wealth by every action, whether interior or exterior, and growing in perfection every moment without ceasing. Excite thyself by her example to seek perfection, and to progress therein by every action of thine whether exterior or interior.

Second Point.—Consider her purity and rectitude of intention, seeking and desiring in all things the glory of God; what hatred she had for sin, and for every shadow thereof, never permitting herself the least imperfection, nor anything whatsoever which might stain her soul, for the sake of any earthly interest, however great, and this to the extent that she would willingly have forfeited her life a thousand times rather than commit the slightest fault or do the least thing displeasing to God. For this reason is she compared to the ermine, of which it is said that it has so great a horror of staining itself, that if there be mud outside its dwelling, it suffers itself to be seized

by the dogs rather than soil its fur, preferring death to the least stain, wherefore the motto given to it is, "*Malo mori quam foedari*,"—I would rather die than defile myself. Even greater than this was the abhorrence that the Blessed Virgin had of sin, from whom thou shouldst learn to banish it from thy heart, and derive from this meditation a most firm resolution to die rather than to defile thy soul by yielding to it.

Third Point.—Consider how great was the purity of the most pure Virgin in both mind and body. Consider successively the five senses and the interior powers of the soul, and then note the very high perfection she reached, and the very intimate union of her will with God to which she attained, having no preference for anything whatsoever, but according to His good pleasure, ever attentive to seek in all things His greater honour and glory, forgetful of her own interest. Contemplate her bright example, the sweet perfume of her virtues, the sanctity of her soul, the peace of her conscience, her love and most perfect charity towards God and her neighbour, and that interior paradise of delights in which God recreated Himself and took such pleasure. Give Him infinite thanks for having given to the world so perfect a pattern of sanctity, rejoice at her perfection, praise and extol her, and through her, her Creator. Entreat Him, as He has given thee this model, to give thee likewise grace to copy it, and beseech the Blessed Virgin herself to obtain this for thee from the Divine Majesty.

Fourth Point.—Consider by what means the Blessed Virgin attained to this perfection, and by what steps she ascended to this pinnacle of sanctity, namely, by the penance she unremittingly performed, by her recollection, silence, labour, and prayer, by her patience and constancy in all her trials, by her burning love for God and His most Holy Son, by the humility and fervour with which she always served Him, and by her other virtues. Follow in her footsteps, adjusting thy life to hers as far as thou art able, for with such a guide and companion thou wilt

advance so greatly as to achieve, by the grace of God, very high perfection.

EIGHTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the Fifth Sunday.

ON THE GOSPEL—(MATT. V.)

In this Gospel Christ assures us that if our justice exceeds not that of the Scribes and Pharisees, who took vengeance on their enemies, we shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. He takes occasion thence to threaten with the gravest punishments all who offend others by their words; and He commands that any one who has anything against his brother should not offer sacrifice to God until he has first been reconciled.

First Point.—Consider in what the virtue and sanctity of the Scribes and Pharisees consisted, and in what thine should consist in order that thou mayest enter into the kingdom of heaven. They attended only to what was exterior, endeavouring to appear holy before men, caring not to be so in the interior of their souls before God by the practice of solid virtue. Wherefore Christ called them¹ whitened sepulchres, externally beautiful, but hideous and putrid within. Fly all such hypocrisy, make it thy study to acquire solid and perfect virtues, and to avoid vanity and human respect, in order that the gate of heaven may be open to thee. Open thine eyes to perceive the vanity of this world, and entreat the assistance of the Lord that thou be not blinded thereby, but mayest endeavour to be humble, and to please His Divine Majesty in all things.

Second Point.—Consider how, instead of exceeding the Scribes and Pharisees in justice, in order to enter the kingdom of heaven, thou hast often remained behind, and

¹ Matt. xxiii.

hast been worse than they, since both exteriorly and interiorly thou hast offended against God and thy neighbour, outstepping the divine law and the bounds of reason. Recall thy past life, acknowledge thy sins and thy lack of that virtue, by which heaven is won. Ask pardon of God, and hasten to lay up a store of merit in order to purchase heaven, and to enjoy the glory of God our Lord.

Third Point.—Consider the earnestness with which Christ commands thee not to offend against thy neighbour by hating him or bearing ill-will against him, either in word, or deed, or thought; and the facility with which thou dost break His commandments, wounding thy brethren by injurious and offensive words, and by inimical actions and desires. Draw thence a firm resolution to correct thy speech, to bridle thy tongue, to repress thy anger, and not to offend thy neighbour for the sake of anything whatsoever.

Fourth Point.—Consider what perfection is required of those who approach the holy sacrifice of the altar, since Christ commands the Pharisees to leave their offering if they perceive in themselves any stain of rancour, and to go first and be reconciled with their neighbour, and then return to the altar. Oh, most exalted Sacrifice, worthy of all reverence; and oh, what carelessness and rashness of men to approach it whilst in sin and without the purity of conscience that it demands! Place thy hand on thy breast, and observe how greatly thou art wanting in what is due to this Lord, Who does thee so great a mercy in giving thee His Body and Blood in this Divine Food. Beg His pardon for thy neglect and the faults thou hast committed against Him, and implore His grace to amend, to purify thy conscience from every stain and imperfection, and to dispose thyself worthily to receive in thy poor dwelling so great a Lord.

*EIGHTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.**For the Monday.*

ON THE GOSPEL—(MATT. V.)

First Point.—Consider how Christ requires that our virtue should exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, of whom He said that they practised not what they taught, and laid on others a burthen which they would not so much as move with a finger of their own, and therefore He excludes them from the kingdom of heaven ; for he only who practises what he teaches shall have a share in His kingdom. Ponder attentively thy life and actions, and see whether thy virtue exceeds theirs. Consider whether thou dost what thou sayest, whether thou dost put in practice what thou teachest, whether thy actions agree with thy words, and whether thou keepest the law of God perfectly, and make it thy study to exceed the Pharisees in virtue, in order that thou mayst enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Second Point.—Consider that Christ is not satisfied by thy doing no injury to thy neighbour, but He requires that thou shouldst not even be angry with him, nor affront him in words ; for whomsoever, He says, shall be angry with his brother shall be condemned at the judgment, and he who shall say to his brother “Thou fool,” shall be condemned to hell. Consider how unbridled is thy tongue, and how many injurious words thou usest towards thy brethren, and dread the wrath of God, for He will be angry with thee if thou art angry with them. Implore His grace to be patient and long-suffering with thy neighbours, loving them, and always speaking kind words to them.

Third Point. — Consider what St. Austin remarks, namely, that Christ here designates three distinct punishments for three different sins. To him who is angry with his brother, the condemnation in judgment is assigned ; to

him who speaks contumeliously to his neighbour, the condemnation in the council, which is composed of many judges; and to him who says "Thou fool," the punishment of hell; because God has ordained that each sin shall have its own particular and suitable chastisement. Turn thine eyes on thyself, and consider how many pains and punishments thou hast deserved for the sins of thy life, and what tortures await thee for so great a number of evil words and actions as thou hast been guilty of against thy brethren. Tremble at the judgments of God, bewail thy sins in His presence, and draw from this meditation a very firm resolution to amend and do good to thy neighbours, even though thou mayst receive only evil from them.

Fourth Point.—Consider how, in this Gospel, Christ cuts off all occasions of discord in order to wall in His city with peace, and to establish us therein. Ponder how greatly He loves peace, and how earnestly He endeavours to maintain it amongst His chosen ones. Derive hence a firm resolution to second His intention with all thy strength, striving to maintain peace amongst all men and to banish discord, that enemy of the charity of Christ. Pray to His Divine Majesty, beseeching Him to establish peace first in thy soul by peace with Him, for if it is a great evil to be at enmity with men, far worse beyond comparison is it to be the enemy of God; and, secondly, by peace with all men, especially with the princes and prelates of His Church and with religious. Offer thyself at His feet to serve Him in this manner, even to laying down thy life for His love.

*EIGHTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.**For the Tuesday.*

ON THE LOVE THAT CHRIST BEARS US, AND ON THAT HE
WOULD HAVE US BEAR ONE TOWARDS ANOTHER.

First Point.—Consider how Christ in the Gospel constitutes Himself the Guardian of our lives and of our honour, forbidding by grievous punishments that any one should offend against us by deed, word, or thought, or bear ill-will against us, exhorting all to love and fraternal charity. Draw hence affections of gratitude to the Lord, and of desire to accomplish His will, being solicitous for His honour and glory as He is for ours and very especially for thine, whereby He imposes on thee the obligation of being as zealous for that of thy neighbour as for thine own.

Second Point.—Consider that, as St. John Chrysostom meditates, Christ our Lord commands us to leave our sacrifice at the altar and go first and be reconciled with our brother, because the sacrifice of those at variance with one another is not agreeable to Him, neither will He accept it from their hands; and whereas God is appeased by sacrifices, and is moved thereby to pardon our offences, discord is so displeasing in His eyes that He will not accept sacrifices from those who are not united by fraternal charity. Ponder with the Saint how great is the mercy of God, who places our welfare before His honour, not accepting the honour offered Him by sacrifice unless we are first united in concord and brotherly love. O Thou good God! would that we knew how to praise and bless Thee worthily for such excessive love and such ardent charity! God desires that we should first be united amongst ourselves and then be united with Him; for He can have no friendship with God who has none for his neighbour. Ponder

these truths, and derive from them lively affections of love and charity towards thy neighbour and a high esteem for this virtue.

Third Point.—Consider that for the establishment of this peace which God wishes should exist amongst men, in order that He may be at peace with them, it is necessary to forget injuries, to forgive one another our mutual insults and offences, and for the love of Christ to convert anger and ill-will into love and benevolence. Fix thine eyes on His cross, and behold Him nailed thereto for thy love, praying to His Eternal Father for His enemies, and learn to forgive thine and to pray for them. Behold with what readiness God pardons thee so many sins, and be not thou difficult in pardoning thy brethren ; for God will not forgive him that forgives not his neighbour. Lay great stress on the consideration of this point, and resolve to forgive every one for the love of Christ and for the sake of peace.

Fourth Point.—Raise thine eyes to the celestial Jerusalem of heaven, of which Christ makes mention in this Gospel, and contemplate the peace and concord of all its inhabitants, what heartfelt love they bear towards each other, a thousand times greater than if they were all children of one mother, for they all love one another in God, in whom they are united by the indissoluble bond of love which no discordant act, word, or thought can disturb. Ask of God grace to imitate them in thy relations with thy neighbour ; beseech Him tenderly to unite and bind us all together in Him with the chain of perfect love and the indissoluble bond of perpetual and eternal charity, which, beginning now, shall endure in the next life for ever and ever.

*EIGHTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.**For the Wednesday.*

ON THE PUNISHMENTS OF THE JUDGMENT AND OF HELL
MENTIONED BY CHRIST IN THE GOSPEL.

First Point.—Consider the first punishment with which Christ threatens those who are angry with their neighbour, which is that of the judgment, in which He says they will be condemned as guilty of grievous sin. Ponder the rectitude of the Judge of that tribunal at which the devils will be the accusers, and at which a most rigorous account will be exacted, and strict note taken of every idle word and of every slightest action performed by man in this world; so that, as holy Job affirms, he will be scarcely able to answer for even one in a thousand of the charges made against him; how then wilt thou be able to answer for all the sins of thy life, for the words thou hast spoken to thy neighbours, and the times that thou hast been angry with them? Remember and consider that it is not possible to escape this arraignment, nor will there be any means of compounding it hereafter, but that undoubtedly thou wilt have to appear before that tribunal, the sins of all thy life will be charged against thee, and thou wilt have to answer for them. Prepare thyself, therefore, in good time, adjusting now thy account, in order to be able to give a satisfactory one hereafter.

Second Point.—Consider the punishment of hell with which Christ here threatens the uncharitable and those who insult their neighbour, which is more bitter than any human tongue can express or human understanding comprehend, however much it may ponder and expiate thereon. Descend in spirit into that dark and dreary dungeon; behold the horrors of that dwelling, the palpable obscurity suffered by the damned, who never see the light, the numberless numbers crowded together in

that narrow prison, the intolerable stench, the society of the demons who torture them, the confusion that reigns amongst them, the ceaseless cries and moans, the burning fire that devours them, the anguish, the sobs, the parching thirst they experience, the accumulation of all sorts of torments, infirmities, and sufferings which each one of the damned endures without any relief, or consolation, or hope thereof, the gnawing worm of conscience that eats at their heart, and, above all, lay stress on the eternity of these sufferings, for ever and ever without limit or end, whilst God is God. Consider and see what would not the damned give to escape therefrom, and what thou wouldst not do not to go there, and take heed in time, shun sin, avoid all rancour and injurious words, of which Christ here speaks, in order that thou be not thereby condemned.

Third Point.—Consider how St. John Chrysostom ponders that our Redeemer here made mention of the kingdom of heaven and of the pains of hell in order that the one might receive greater prominence from the consideration of the other. Reflect on both these places; compare the one with the other, the glory of the good with the sufferings of the wicked, and behold the difference that exists between them, and that of necessity one of these two abodes must be thine, either to reign with Christ and the blessed in heaven for ever, or to suffer with the demons and the damned in hell. Draw hence a lively desire of salvation, fear of God and of His chastisements, and a yearning desire of His rewards; beg of God to stretch forth His hand to assist thee, that thou fall not into hell, but by His grace mayest ascend to heaven.

Fourth Point.—Lastly, consider what St. John Chrysostom says on those words, "Whosoever shall say to his brother, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire," that he in truth is a fool who ignores God and keeps not His commandments, and he is wise who knows how to serve God and to save his soul. Oh, what great wisdom is

this, and how many are there who, esteemed as wise by the world, are condemned as fools before God, because they ignore that which is of the greatest importance to them, namely, their salvation ! How many, on the contrary, does the world hold to be fools who are most wise in the judgment of God and of the heavenly court, because they know how to despise that which is transitory and perishable, and to love and seek that which is eternal. Reflect on thyself, and consider what manner of life thou dost lead ; take cognisance of the state of thy soul, see what opinion God has of thee, and heed not the judgment of men. Be not so foolish as to set aside the gold for the sake of the mud, precious stones for sham ones, and the reality for the shadow ; beg light from God to know the truth, and strength to embrace and follow it, and to esteem what deserves to be valued, that is, virtue, and to despise what the world worships, deceived by false appearances.

EIGHTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON CHRIST, THE MODEL OF SANCTITY AND PERFECTION.

First Point.—Christ our Lord tells us in the Gospel of St. Matthew, “Learn of Me that I am meek and humble of heart,” which words apply to the whole course of His life, in which He teaches us the way of perfection. Contemplate, O my soul, the immense goodness of the Saviour, Who chose to come down from heaven to become man in order to be thy Master, and to teach thee at so great a cost to Himself the way of virtue and the height of perfection. Consider Who Christ is and who thou art, and how important is His teaching and the office He has taken on Himself of thy Master. Render Him infinite thanks for so doing, entreat Him humbly to

admit thee into His school and to deign to accept thee for His disciple, and resolve firmly to become His follower and to learn from His life and teaching how to direct thine.

Second Point.—Consider the life of Christ from the manger to the cross, the whole course whereof was a lesson of sanctity and of how to walk on the road of perfection. Meditate the contempt of the world with which He lived as a pilgrim on earth and a citizen of heaven; contemplate His actions at the various stages of His earthly career, what purity of life, without stain or blemish of sin or shadow of imperfection. Take note of His every word and movement, count His steps, and in all thou wilt find a pattern of humility, gravity, modesty, temperance, charity, patience, meekness, and submission to the holy law of God. Contemplate thyself in this mirror, and beg of God light to know thy faults, to correct thine errors, to follow in His footsteps, to imitate His virtues, and to journey in His company, bearing thy cross along the way of perfection.

Third Point.—Consider the interior sanctity of the soul of Christ our Lord and the perfection of His Spirit. Behold the intention which directed all His actions to the greater glory of His Eternal Father and the good of souls. Behold His understanding ever occupied in the contemplation of God, His will ever most intimately united with the Father's, having no other desire than His good pleasure, and solely occupied in loving Him, His memory ever employed in the things of His service, without for an instant losing sight of Him, continually making acts of love and most perfect charity, His interior spirit constantly manifesting itself in his exterior actions, which were all performed with extreme perfection. Draw hence a model for thyself, and although on account of thy weakness thou canst not reach the height of His perfection, at least aspire towards it; and since he exhorts thee to learn of Him, choose Him for the Master of thy life, and follow His example as far as thou

art able. Solicit His grace, and He will give it thee, that thou mayst be able to imitate Him and to realise His desire.

Fourth Point.—Consider the patience of Christ, both that which He manifested in this world, suffering so much for us, and that which He still exhibits in bearing with the many offences of sinners. Learn to be long-suffering and meek of heart towards all, not only towards those who do good to thee, but likewise towards those who injure thee; take the yoke of His law on thy shoulders, and thou wilt find rest for thy soul, according to the promise of the Lord.

NINETIETH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

HOW THE ANGELS TEACH US PERFECTION.

First Point.—Consider that the angelic spirits are likewise teachers of perfection to man in those of their actions that are known to us. Contemplate first how they were created in grace and adorned with so many and such excellent virtues, and how they at once acknowledged God for their Lord and Creator, and gave Him thanks for the favours He had conferred on them, abasing themselves in His presence and offering themselves to His service. Draw hence affections of humility and gratitude towards thy God for the benefits He has bestowed on thee, and thank Him for them, offering thyself in union with these exalted spirits to serve Him eternally.

Second Point.—Contemplate the ardent affection with which the angels love God, and how they have no other occupation than praising and serving Him. Penetrate by meditation into their innermost will; behold how united and conformed it is to that of God. Entreat the

Lord to give thee some share in the abundant wealth of grace which He has bestowed on them, in order that thou mayest be able to imitate them in submitting thy understanding and thy will to His, loving Him and serving Him with all thy strength, with all thy mind, and with all thy heart.

Third Point.—Consider the obedience so exact, so prompt, and punctual with which they serve God and obey Him, flying to execute His commands without resistance or delay or any other contrary disposition, but rather with unspeakable promptitude and rapidity. Oh, that we men thus obeyed the commands of God! Beseech Him to deign to subdue thy insubordination, to overcome thy repugnance, and to give thee His grace in order to imitate the obedience of the angels in serving His Divine Majesty.

Fourth Point.—Consider the continuous prayer with which they praise God; for, as Christ says, they always see His face, although they descend into the world to fulfil the ministries with which He entrusts them. Observe the manner in which they execute His commands without ever staining themselves by the slightest imperfection, but, on the contrary, always praising and blessing His Divine Majesty in all events, whether prosperous or adverse, with perfect equanimity in whatever circumstances, never being proud or vain in success nor discouraged or sad in adversity. Take to thyself this lesson, and learn the perfection which shines forth in the angels; implore God to give thee His Spirit that thou mayest be able to reproduce it in thy soul, and, like the angels, serve, love, obey, praise, and glorify Him in all thine actions.

*NINETY-FIRST MEDITATION.**For the Saturday.*

ON THE PERFECTION OF THE SAINTS, AND HOW WE SHOULD IMITATE IT.

First Point.—Place before thine eyes the perfection of life that shone forth in the saints on earth from the day on which they enrolled themselves in the army of Christ to fight under His banner; and meditate, in the first place, the determination with which they cast aside all worldly things, devoting themselves with all their strength to the service of God. Consider the holy apostles, all the holy confessors, hermits, virgins, and religious; render a thousand thanks to God for the favours He bestowed on them, and beseech Him to grant thee the favour of His assistance, that thou mayest despise the world and devote thyself to His service.

Second Point.—Consider the penitence of the saints, the rigour with which they treated their bodies; how they mortified their passions, what silence and recollection they maintained. Behold how continual were their fastings and penances, their prayer and contemplation, their obedience and humility, and their other virtues, which were the steps by which they ascended to the heights of perfection. Excite thyself to follow them, and beg of God His grace to imitate them, and He will certainly give it thee if thou dost resolve to walk in their footsteps.

Third Point.—Consider the patience of the saints in the midst of trials, their humility amidst honours, the contempt of themselves evinced in their actions, their equanimity under all circumstances. Entering into the interior of their souls, contemplate how united their will was to that of God, how submissive to His decrees, how prompt they were in hearkening to His voice, how eager was their obedience in executing His commands, and how

anxious they were to please Him, to serve Him, and to glorify Him in all things, never seeking their own interest in anything, but only the greater honour and glory of their God. Note the purity of their souls, and the magnitude of their virtues, how they always aspired to what was most perfect, and continually increased their wealth of merits. Praise God in His saints, and offer to follow them; beseech the saints themselves to instruct and assist thee in the imitation of their virtues, in order that, following in their footsteps and journeying with them, thou mayest reach the summit of perfection.

Fourth Point.—Consider the singular favours that God bestowed on the saints in this life on account of their great merits, the glory with which He rewards them in the next, and the crowns which they now enjoy in the company of the Lamb with the angels surrounding the throne of His glory. Contemplate their beatitude, and that eternal felicity which will have no end, and strive to imitate them in the hope of so magnificent a reward. Cast thyself at their feet, beseeching them to lend thee a hand, and to be thy advocates before God in order to obtain His grace; implore and entreat the Lord Himself, by the merits and intercession of the saints, to grant thee grace to begin to serve Him, and to travel onwards perseveringly, all the days of thy life, until thou dost reach the high and holy mountain of Sion.

NINETY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Sixth Sunday.

ON THE GOSPEL OF THE DAY—(MARK VIII.)

The Gospel relates a miracle wrought by Christ our Lord, by which He fed four thousand persons, who had followed Him into the desert, with seven loaves and a

few fishes; the remnants of which being gathered up, filled seven baskets.

First Point.—Consider the fervour of those who followed Christ, attracted by His heavenly doctrine, how for three whole days they forgot the sustenance of their bodies for the sake of the food of their souls which they received at the hands of Christ. Blush in His presence, acknowledging thy tepidity and thy lack of the necessary fervour to follow God, so bound and wrapped up art thou in temporal pleasures, which thou dost prefer to those spiritual and divine things which are the food of the soul. Draw from this meditation great esteem for the doctrine of Christ; desire to follow Him, and to postpone all earthly concerns to the welfare of thy soul.

Second Point.—Consider the care the Saviour evinced for those who hearkened to His words and followed Him into the desert, what pity He felt for them, and how He compassionated their needs. Oh, what a truly paternal heart, so loving, benign, and pitiful! Learn from His solicitude to be considerate of the needs of thy neighbour, showing mercy towards all, and thou wilt find God merciful towards thee.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ asked His disciples whence He could obtain relief for the necessities of those who followed Him, not for want of knowledge, but in order to test their faith and confidence. Oh, how often does God act thus with thee, deferring to grant thee things that are needful to thee, and even opposing obstacles in thy way, in order to try thy faith and confidence. Draw light from this trial to which our Lord subjected His disciples never to lose confidence in His goodness, for though He delays and puts difficulties in the way of what thou dost desire and solicit, He knows the time and manner of succouring thee, and when thou dost least expect it thou wilt experience His mercy, as did His guests of to-day. O Lord, strengthen my heart, and give me Thy grace in order that I may trust most confidently in Thee, and if Thou shouldst try me as Thou

didst Thy disciples, I will rely on Thy bounty, Whose protection is always most powerfully manifested when the need is greatest.

Fourth Point.—Contemplate the miracle wrought by our Redeemer in the desert; be present in spirit at His banquet, behold Him so affable, smiling, loving, benign, and generous towards all, standing in the midst of the multitude with His eyes and heart fixed on God, dividing and distributing the loaves and fishes with great love and charity to all the crowd. Behold the people seated and the Redeemer standing, they eating and He multiplying the food, and distributing it to them with excessive benignity and many tokens of love; the apostles waiting upon all, and giving thanks to God for so great a miracle and so signal a mercy. Praise Him, thou also, with them; give thanks likewise to Christ, and beseech Him not to allow thee to remain hungry whilst He feeds all the rest. Cry aloud, entreat and implore Him to give thee one morsel of the remains of His feast; coming from His hand it will sustain thee.

NINETY-THIRD MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE BANQUET GIVEN BY CHRIST IN THE DESERT.

First Point.—Consider how Christ waited three days before succouring the need of those who had followed Him, because He desires that we should acknowledge our necessities, and the need we have of Him to assist and relieve us therein. Enter into thyself and recognise thy weakness, how little thou art, how impotent of thyself, and how in all things and for everything thou needest the grace of God. Cast thyself at His feet with humility, and He will be favourable to thee and will assit

thee with His grace, in order that thou mayest be able thereby to do that which of thyself thou canst not achieve.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ gave this banquet, in the desert, where the people had nothing to eat, nor any means of obtaining succour in their need, because the Lord assists with His providence those who abandon the pleasures and feastings of this world, and that, when they are most destitute and when all human aid fails. Whence thou shouldst draw two lessons : the one is to abandon all the delights of this world in order to enjoy those that God offers, and to render thyself worthy to sit at His table and partake of His banquet, which He offers not to those who regale themselves with earthly pleasures and delights. The other is of confidence in God, knowing that He awaits the time of our greatest need and the moment of most pressing want in order to manifest His providence and to show forth His generosity, succouring us with His gifts when human aid most completely fails.

Third Point.—Consider the quality of the viands that composed this feast, which were barley bread and a few fishes, our Lord providing not dainties, but what should relieve want, what was necessary for the support of man, not superfluities. Oh, what a lesson He gives thee of shunning superfluities in food and clothing, in jewels and appointments, and in all things ! Little is necessary to thy support ; take from the river of this world the needful, and let the rest pass on. Remember that God rejected the soldiers of Gedeon who laid themselves down on the ground to drink, and selected those who stretched out their hands to take the water they needed, letting the rest run by ; because He rejects from heaven those who throw themselves into the vortex of this world and cling to its pleasures, and He chooses for His kingdom those who stretch forth their hands to take with moderation what is necessary for life and leave the rest. Beg of God His grace not to allow thy heart to deliver

itself up to temporal things, nor to accept more than what is needful, in order to secure that which is eternal.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the multitude relished that barley bread, and how it satisfied them; for the Evangelist tells us that “they had their fill,” and their hunger was quite appeased, so that they wanted no more, because God knows how to give greater sweetness and savour and more relish to penitential food than the world can give to all its dainty and delicate viands. Whence thou shouldst draw great love of penance, fasting, the asperities of mortification, and coarse food for Christ’s sake, accepting them most willingly, and trusting to Him that He will know how to render them savoury and more wholesome to thee than all the most palatable and dainty food of the age. O Lord! grant me this grace, that everything that is of the world may be bitter to me for Thy sake, and penance and mortification sweet, like the barley bread, as coming to me from Thy hand.

NINETY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON ALMSGIVING AND CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

First Point.—Consider how Christ spread a splendid table in the desert for those who had followed Him, hearkening to Him, and seeking the spiritual welfare of their souls; and He gave them both spiritual and material food, because to those who seek in the first place heavenly things the Lord gives likewise temporal ones. Whence thou shouldst learn to be very covetous of heavenly goods, and to have a firm confidence in the Lord that He will give them to thee if thou seekest them in the first place and with them temporal ones. Thus did He deal with Solomon when he asked for wisdom in order to know how to serve Him, and with those who

followed Him into the desert attracted by their eagerness for the spiritual advantage of their souls.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ gave the bread to His disciples, and they distributed it to the guests, because God gives wealth and worldly goods to His servants, not in order that they should keep them, but that they may distribute them to the needy and the poor who suffer want. See whether thou fulfillest this duty, whether thou givest alms with the wealth that God has intrusted to thee, or whether thou dost hoard it unnecessarily. Trust in His providence, which will not fail thee, and resolve to give alms with what God has bestowed on thee. Ask for a large heart like that with which He gifted Solomon, in order to distribute generously and with true charity the little or the much wealth that thou mayst possess to the poor and needy who require it.

Third Point.—Consider how those loaves and fishes increased in the hands of God, and were so multiplied as to afford sufficient and superabundant food for so great a concourse of people, and recognise therein how alms are multiplied when placed in the hands of the poor man who receives them in the name of God ; there do they increase and multiply as in the hands of Christ. Give thanks to the Lord for the wonders He works each day, and draw hence the resolution of placing all thy property in the hands of God, where it will be safe, and thou wilt receive abundant increase, as was the case with the barley loaves.

Fourth Point.—Consider how seven baskets full of fragments remained from this meal ; such is the abundance of the table of the Lord. The table of this world is scanty and its viands are savourless, without substance, and always insufficient, as was the wine at the marriage-feast of Cana ; but the table of God being the result of His liberality, is always most abundant. Give Him thanks for this ; rejoice to have such a Lord and Father, so magnificent and so generous ; resolve to serve Him

and to abandon the penury of the world. And consider, further, how these fragments were given to him who had supplied the loaves and the few fishes, because it is a part of God's providence to render a hundred for one. Draw from this meditation knowledge of the fruit of almsgiving and a great esteem for this virtue, and beg of God grace to exercise it towards thy neighbour, as He exercised it towards the multitude that had followed Him into the desert.

NINETY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE HOLY SACRAMENTS OF THE CHURCH, AND
ESPECIALLY ON THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

First Point.—Consider the mystery contained in the miraculous multiplication of the seven loaves in the hands of Christ by which all those who followed Him were nourished, for they are symbolical of the seven Sacraments which He has instituted in His Church for the benefit, life, and remedy of the faithful. Therein He has given us food for our souls, medicine for our infirmities, relief in our toils, and seven fountains of grace wherewith to remedy all our wants. Give Him many thanks for them; examine what use thou dost make of these heavenly remedies, and what fruit thou dost derive therefrom, and implore grace from God to benefit as thou shouldst by these salutary remedies.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ did not Himself distribute the bread to the crowd, but by the hands of His apostles, in order that they might have a share in that work of charity, and that the guests might esteem them the more, and be grateful to them for the food they received at their hands. In like manner, although Christ instituted the Sacraments, He wills that we should receive them through the hands of His priests, to whom He left

the keys and power to administer them, in order that we may respect and reverence them because of the inestimable benefits we receive from their hands, of the need we have of them, and of the esteem that God manifests towards them, since He intrusts to them the keys of His treasures. Ponder here the elevation of the sacerdotal dignity ; derive thence increased esteem for the ministers of God, and see with what respect and reverence thou shouldst treat them.

Third Point.—Consider those words of our Saviour, “I have compassion on the multitude. . . . I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way ;” which are especially fulfilled in the Holy Eucharist, which is the most august Sacrament instituted by Christ for the nourishment of souls ; and many, as St. Paul says, are weak and infirm because they approach not the table of the Saviour to eat of this bread of angels. Ponder how important its frequentation is, what strength it gives to the soul, and draw hence the desire of approaching and receiving it very often, in order to strengthen thy spirit, and to be able, like Elias, to travel courageously onwards to the mountain of God, which is the celestial Jerusalem.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ miraculously multiplied the loaves for the nourishment of those who followed Him, and how, in like manner, His presence is miraculously multiplied in many hosts, on many altars, and in many places, for the nourishment of souls. Ponder this unheard of wonder which He renews every day in His Church ; contemplate the intention and the love with which He performs it, and that which He thereby manifests towards thee ; admire His extreme bounty, and marvel at so unprecedented a favour. Give Him endless thanks for it ; entreat the angels and seraphim and all creatures to thank Him for and with thee, and consider what gratitude thou dost owe the Lord for so great a mercy.

*NINETY-SIXTH MEDITATION.**For the Thursday.*

ON THE BANQUET THAT CHRIST OFFERS US IN THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

First Point.—Consider how this banquet that Christ gave in the desert to those who followed Him was a symbol and image of that which He daily offers in the Holy Eucharist, taking the bread in His hands, which are those of the priest, and blessing it, consecrating it, and distributing it to the faithful, and therein giving them His own Body and Blood, which, as we said in the previous Meditation, is an unparalleled favour. Ponder the value of this food, Who He is that gives it to thee, and what it is that He gives thee. See how thou shouldst receive it, venerate it, and how deserve it, and beseech the Lord to make thee worthy to receive it as thou shouldst.

Second Point.—Consider by what actions these persons merited this banquet from the Saviour, and to receive from His hand that miraculous bread, namely, by leaving their homes, and withdrawing to the desert in the company of Christ, never losing sight of Him, hearkening to His teaching, and keeping His words in their hearts for their salvation. Ponder this conduct, and learn to dispose thyself to receive the Lord by retiring for a time from the bustle of the world and of exterior business into the desert of thy heart, communing with God, hearkening to His voice, ruminating and digesting His words in the interior of thy soul by meditation.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ commanded the company to sit down and arrange themselves in good order, that the bread might be distributed to them. For He desires that the Divine Bread which He gives us in the Blessed Sacrament should be received without haste, and deliberately, with devotion and reflection on what

effects it produces in us, and with far other appreciation than if it were corporal food. Oh, that thou didst rightly meditate this point! Consider what fruit thou derivest from so many Communion, and the account thereof that God will require from thee! Enter now into account with thyself; examine how many times thou hast received Holy Communion, and what fruit thou hast derived therefrom. Bewail thy faults, beg pardon of God, and solicit His grace in order that this Celestial Bread may henceforth be fruitful in thy soul.

Fourth Point.—Consider what these guests did after they had eaten, namely, they all gave repeated thanks to our Saviour, proclaimed Him a great Prophet and the Redeemer of the world, and sought to crown Him King. This is what thou shouldst do after Holy Communion, give many thanks to God for the favour He has conferred on thee, proclaim Him King of thy heart, and beseech Him not to separate Himself from thee, but rather to remain with thee, and, as a munificent Sovereign, add favours to favours, multiplying His graces in thy soul in proportion to thy need.

NINETY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE BENEFITS OF GOD IN GENERAL.

First Point.—Consider Who God is, from Whose hand flow all the blessings and mercies that thou receivest, namely, a Lord infinitely good, wise, and powerful, the Author and end of all things, Who exists of Himself, without dependence on thee or any other, and on Whom thou and all things depend for their being and preservation. Contemplate that inaccessible majesty, and above all that immense and incomprehensible goodness and infinite power; admire His greatness, sovereignty, and

majesty, worship Him with entire submission and gratitude for the favours He confers on thee.

Second Point.—Consider who thou art on whom God bestows these favours, for there is nothing vile enough wherewith to compare thee ; thou art less than the slime of the streets or the dust of the earth, a very nothing in His comparison. Consider what an atom is to the sun, what a grain of sand to the whole earth, what a mere speck to the heavens ; and behold thou art less than this compared to God. With reason, then, did holy Job wonder that a Being so exalted should be mindful of a thing so vile, so weak, that He should regard so miserable, so wretched a creature as man ; how much more shouldst not thou wonder at His being mindful of thee, who art the most vile, the weakest, and most despicable of all creatures. Consider how little thou art worth, both as regards the natural and the spiritual order. In the natural order thou hast not of thyself strength for anything, and in the supernatural, thou art only capable of sins and offences against God. Humble thyself in His presence below the depths of the earth, and be overcome with wonder that He should remember thee, and not only that, but should love and value thee and bestow favours on thee.

Third Point.—Consider the multitude of graces and benefits that thou receivest from so great a Lord. He it was Who created thee ; He redeemed thee, He preserves thy life and being. He gives thee food and air to breathe ; the very water thou drinkest is a gift from His hand. Rise higher, and consider the spiritual benefits that He has conferred and still confers on thee, and thou wilt perceive that they are incomparably greater and more numerous than these natural gifts ; for besides redeeming thee, as has been already said, He has brought thee into His Church, whilst so many remain outside ; He has given thee His Sacraments, the state of life to which thou art called, the faith and knowledge thou hast of Him, graces and aids to salvation, the pardon of thy sins, His succour

to arise out of them, grace not to return to sin, and to protect thee against the assaults of the devil, and other innumerable graces both general and particular, for all of which thou dost owe Him intense gratitude, constant and faithful service.

Fourth Point.—Consider the motive that God has in conferring these favours upon thee, which is none other than His infinite goodness, love, and charity; because He has been moved to do good to thee without having any need of thee; rather (as has been said) thou hast need of Him in all things and for everything. Contemplate attentively this infinite charity of the Lord, and how bound thou art to reverence Him, love Him, and serve Him eternally with all thy strength. Then turn thine eyes on thyself, and consider how ill thou hast corresponded to such favours and benefits; for not only hast thou been wanting in the service thou art bound to render Him, but moreover thou hast offended Him by innumerable sins. Let thy heart be riven with grief for such execrable ingratitude, and excite within it lively desires and purposes of amendment; beg pardon for thy past offences, and implore grace to serve God henceforth as thou shouldst.

NINETY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE BENEFIT OF CREATION.

First Point.—Consider, first, how God created all things with the mighty arm of His omnipotence. The heavens and the earth, angels and men, the elements, the sun, the moon and the stars, all that moves in the heavens or beneath them, all receive their existence from His hand, and without Him was made nothing that was made, as St. John tells us, for God alone exists of Himself, without dependence on another. Contemplate this

omnipotence of the Lord, and marvel at His power, and at the wisdom with which He has created and disposed all things, and call on all creatures, as participators in this benefit, to aid thee in giving Him thanks for it.

Second Point.—Consider how God our Lord created all these things by His only will, without being besought thereto by another, or urged by the merits of any creature whatsoever, for none existed at that time, but only out of His pure grace and goodness, in order to do good and to communicate His perfections to the creatures that He brought to light. Draw hence affections of renewed gratitude, desires of extolling the infinite bounty of God, and likewise of imitating it by doing good to all as far as thou art able, according to the example of God our Lord, without limiting thyself in any way, or requiring to be sought or urged by others.

Third Point.—Consider how God drew all creatures out of nothing and gave them the being that they have. Ponder with what facility and in what order He created them, wherein shines forth not only His omnipotence, but also His infinite wisdom. Ponder what they were before He created them, that is, naught, as the things that have now no existence, and the Lord gave them the existence that they have by His only will, and in like manner He can destroy them and let them return to their own nothingness. His omnipotence and wisdom are likewise manifested in the order that exists amidst all created things and their dependence one on another. Contemplate the order and movements of the heavens, the diversity of the stars and their influences, the motion of the sun and of the moon, the varieties of creatures, the order and arrangement of the elements, the living things that people them, and how they yield each other subsistence. Observe the difference between the birds, the fishes, the animals, trees, grasses, flowers, stones, pearls, and other things that God has created. Praise and extol His wisdom and power in all these things, and humble thyself in the presence of such mighty power.

Fourth Point.—Consider, with St. Laurence Justinian, that all the creatures that God has created serve Him in that for which He gave them being, man only excepted, to whom He showed greater favour, and who should serve Him better. Review rapidly the heavens and all they contain, the earth and what is enfolded in its bosom, and so with the other elements, and thou wilt find nothing which does not serve the purpose for which God created it; man alone is rebellious to His will, strays away from it, and instead of serving God offends Him. Oh, supreme ingratitude for such exceeding benefits! Weep, bewail, and lament so grievous an offence; and entreat the Lord to sustain thee with His arm that thou mayst not fall into the like. Give Him infinite thanks for having brought thee out of nothing; acknowledge thyself His; beseech Him to fetter thee as His slave, in order that thou mayst never stray one step away from His service.

NINETY-NINTH MEDITATION.

For the Seventh Sunday after Pentecost.

ON THE GOSPEL—(MATT. VII.)

The Holy Gospel for to-day contains a warning that Christ gave His disciples, admonishing them to beware of false prophets who come in sheep's clothing, but in truth are ravishing wolves, whom they were to recognise by their works and not by their words; for he is not worthy of credit nor of heaven who confesses God only with the tongue, but he who does the will of God and puts it in practice.

First Point.—Consider, first, how Christ our Lord charges thee to take heed and attend to the care of thy soul; and that this should be the first anxiety of thy heart, to keep watch and observe with whom thou dost deal, with whom thou dost converse, what words are

addressed to thee, what advice is given thee, what doctrine taught thee, lest by thy carelessness thou be deceived and led into error. Take heed likewise of the thoughts that knock at the door of thy heart, for frequently, even when they appear good at first, they lead to evil, and the devil feigns himself an angel of light in order to deceive. O Lord! grant me prudence and knowledge of the truth, and discretion to distinguish between good and evil. Give me grace in order that I may always watch and never fail in a matter so important as Thy service and the welfare of my soul.

Second Point.—Consider what Christ says, that many come with sheep's clothing who are interiorly ravishing wolves. Observe and consider whether thou be one of these. See whether thou be exteriorly a Christian, but interiorly a pagan and an infidel, and even worse, in thy conduct. See whether thou be in name and profession a religious or an ecclesiastic, and in thy life worse than are many secular persons who live better than thou, whose life is not in accordance with thy state, and whose interior agrees not with thy exterior. O sinner! what answer wilt thou give to God, Who knows thy wickedness, Who will judge thee most rigorously, and will look not to the exterior, as men do, but to the interior of thy soul and intention, in which true virtue consists! Think over this attentively, and beg of God grace to correct thy life and to abide in His presence, conforming thyself both exteriorly and interiorly to His most holy will.

Third Point.—Consider what our Saviour says, viz., that a man shall be known by his works, as a tree is known by its fruit. See what thine have been throughout the course of thy life, and what fruit the Lord of the vineyard will find in thee when He comes to seek the result of His labours. Open thine eyes and see thy poverty in the presence of God, how, instead of the fruit of good works, thou hast yielded only the thistles and briars of vice and sin. Weep over thy past life, and draw hence most firm resolutions of amendment, and of

recovering in the future what thou hast lost in the past.

Fourth Point.—Consider how our Redeemer adds that not all those who call Him Lord and who praise Him with their lips shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but those who do the will of His Heavenly Father. Ponder the importance of entering into heaven, and what a misfortune it would be if thou wert excluded thence, and not permitted to enter therein. Meditate what the Lord requires of thee in order to merit that kingdom, namely, the accomplishment of His will. Observe what He has manifested it to be His will thou shouldst do, according to thy state and profession, and resolve with all earnestness to perform it without delay. Offer thyself to the Lord to do in everything His holy will, renouncing thine own, and having neither desire or aversion beyond the holy will and pleasure of His Divine Majesty.

HUNDREDTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE FRUIT OF GOOD WORKS.

First Point.—Consider how Christ has planted thee in the paradise of His Church, in order that thou shouldst produce fruit of good works, and thou yieldest evil ones; and if He ordered the unfruitful fig-tree to be rooted up, what will He have done to the tree that produces nothing but briars? Cast thine eyes around on the trees of this paradise, and see what abundant fruits of good works they yield, some of penance, others of preaching, others of teaching the faithful, others of mercy and charity, and all of good example, and thou alone of all art fruitless. What a judgment awaits thee! and what will be the sentence of the Lord? Tremble at His judgments, at the account He will require thee to give of thy works,

and beseech Him with tears to grant thee time to improve them.

Second Point.—Consider the severe sentence that will be pronounced against the tree that yields not good fruit : “Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire.” Meditate attentively this awful decree, which is signed by the hand of God, and declared to men. Ponder the activity of that fire, those devouring flames, that endless torment of the fire that burns without destroying, and heats without ever reducing to ashes, but rather, like a raging fever, burns both interiorly and exteriorly without demolishing its victim ; thus is the torture endless, and it will endure for ever. Lay stress on the consideration of this fire, together with its duration, see what price thou wouldst not pay to avoid falling into it, and since God has given thee time, cultivate the tree of thy life which He has committed to thee in order that thou mayst yield fruit of good and holy actions, and mayst merit to be rewarded by the Lord.

Third Point.—Consider how the merit of good works consists, as Christ says, in the accordance of the interior with the exterior, and that the good action must be animated by a holy intention and desire of serving God and being agreeable to Him, and without any consideration of vanity or human applause, in order that we may not wear externally sheep’s clothing whilst the heart of a wolf beats below. Examine thy works in the presence of the Lord ; beg of Him light to know them and to correct them, and that they may be so performed by thee as to be pleasing to His Divine Majesty.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the Saviour says that as an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit, so neither can a sinner perform good works meritorious for heaven. Cast thine eyes on those that thou hast performed during the course of thy life, and see how many have been profitless because not performed in a state of grace ; weep to see how careless thou art of amassing immortal riches,

whilst thou art so covetous of the empty and perishable wealth of this earth. Draw from this meditation a high esteem for the grace of God, a keen sorrow for all that thou hast lost through lack of it, and a firm resolution to secure it and preserve it at whatever cost of labour and care, perceiving it to be the root and heart of the good tree from which our works receive what merit they possess. Cry aloud to God from thine innermost heart, and affectionately beseech Him rather to annihilate thee than to deprive thee of His grace, for it were better to exist no longer than to live at enmity with God.

HUNDRED AND FIRST MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD CHRISTIAN.

First Point.—Consider that as the tree that does not bring forth good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire, according to the words of our Saviour, so on the other hand that which yields good fruit shall be valued by God and transplanted into the paradise of His glory. Pause here a moment, and ponder deliberately how one of these two fates must of necessity be thine, either to be transferred to heaven or cast down into hell; behold the great difference there is between the one and the other, and how important it is for thee not to fail in an undertaking which after this life cannot be amended, and take very much to heart the cultivation of that tree, in order that it may yield good fruit and be chosen for the garden of heaven. Cry out to God and to His saints to assist thee; make them thy advocates; do not forget them; compel them by faithful service, in order that they may be ever propitious to thee, and may lend thee a hand to ascend to glory.

Second Point.—Consider how the Redeemer says that in order to enter heaven it is not sufficient to praise Him with the lips, but His will must be done in all things ; for faith without works suffices not, neither is exterior religion enough without interior charity to secure salvation. Observe that thou art a Christian, and that it is necessary that thy life should correspond to that name, and that thou must honour God not with thy lips only, but far more by thy works. Consider whether they be such as to render glory to the Lord, and derive hence most fervent desires of acting in a most holy manner, and of praising God, not only with thy lips, but much more by thy deeds and with thy heart.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ has planted thee in His Church in order that thou shouldst be a fruitful tree, and not a profitless briar that wounds and injures. Moreover, He has watered thee with His precious Blood, and cultivated thee by the means of His ministers ; He has given thee the fountains of His Holy Sacraments, the rain of His grace, the warmth and heat of His Holy Spirit. See what profit thou hast derived from so many benefits, and what fruit thou hast yielded to God and to thy neighbour. Tremble at the account that will be required of them from thee, and draw hence a resolution to amend, and to render fruitful in thy soul the cultivation thou hast received from the Lord, yielding henceforth an abundant harvest of holy works.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ speaks here of thorns and of vines, by which are signified a good and an evil conscience ; the good conscience is figured by the vine, which yields abundant and sweet fruit, the evil conscience by the thorn, which instead of fruit produces only hurtful thorns. Oh, what thorns afflict the evil conscience, and what sweetness does the good one experience ! how barren is the former, how fruitful the latter ! Lay stress on this consideration ; observe the restlessness and disgust that thy soul has experienced when thy conscience has been evil, and the peace and sweetness thou dost enjoy

when it is good. Solicit grace of the Lord in order to purify thy conscience from all sin, to remove the thorns that pierce it, and to perform works worthy of His servant, in order to obtain that peace and tranquillity that a good and healthy conscience gives which is tormented by no remorse for any sin committed against Him.

HUNDRED AND SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON CHRIST OUR LORD, SIGNIFIED BY THE CLUSTER OF GRAPES.

First Point.—St. John Chrysostom, meditating on this Gospel, says that Christ is the cluster of grapes of which mention is here made, who hung from the tree of the cross; according to those words of the canticle, “My Beloved is to me as a cluster of grapes in the vineyards of Engaddi.” Contemplate what this heavenly Cluster of Grapes endured for thee, how He was seized, struck, trodden under foot, and pressed in the wine-press of the cross. See how this heavenly cluster is not to be found on the thorn tree of this world, neither does he merit to experience its sweetness who knows not how to suffer for the love of Christ. Contemplate what He suffered for thee, and blush to see Him choose the thorns and the cross whilst thou preferest sensual pleasures and comforts, a soft bed and recreation of the senses; implore His forgiveness, and solicit grace to suffer for His love.

Second Point.—Consider, with the same St. Chrysostom, how Christ poured the wine of His Blood into the chalice of the altar, and gave thee His most Holy Body in the host, in which He offers Himself for thee. Ponder what He says in the Gospel of to-day, that grapes are not gathered off thorns, but off the good and fertile vine.

See whether thy soul be a fruitful vine or a thorny bramble, and accordingly whether thou dost deserve to receive this Lord. Render thanks to Him for the food and drink of His Body and Blood that He prepares for thee, and for this heavenly wine which He offers thee in order to rejoice and comfort thy heart. Beg of Him the dew of His grace and the cultivation necessary to render thee a vine fruitful in good works, instead of a thorny bramble yielding nothing but sins.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ says that each tree yields fruit according to its kind ; the good tree yields good fruit, the evil tree evil fruit ; grapes are not gathered from thorns, nor figs from brambles, because every one gathers what he sows. Oh, how soon will the time of the harvest come, and the autumn of death, when the fruits sown in the winter of this life will have to be gathered ! Consider what thou hast sown, according to which will be what thou shalt reap ; if thorns, thou wilt gather thorns, which will torment thee eternally ; but if good works, then most sweet reward of glory. Take heed now, whilst God grants thee time, what thou wouldst then wish to have done, because grapes are not gathered from thorns, and learn hence to sow holy works, which may procure for thee future glory in heaven.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ compares us to the fig-tree which He cursed because it bore no fruit although it was not the season of fruit ; because, as Origen tells us, there is no season at which the faithful should not yield the fruit of good works ; all times are seasons of work and labour whilst we live in this world. O my soul ! how art thou so idle, knowing not the hour when the Lord will come to require from thee the fruit of thy works, and the harvest He expects from His labours and care for thee, from the watering of His Blood and the benefits of His Holy Sacraments ? O Lord ! give courage to my heart, that I may begin to serve Thee with the fervour that I ought, and to correspond by my works to thy mercies ; grant me never to be careless in Thy holy

service, but rather to yield always the fruit of good works that Thou requirest from me.

HUNDRED AND THIRD MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE CREATION OF MAN.

First Point.—Consider how God, before creating man, created the whole of this universe, with so many and such divers creatures, for his service, preparing thus an abode for him, and adorning it, as Philo says, for his residence and enjoyment, and, as it were, becoming Himself his landlord in this world. Praise Divine providence, and the love God has shown to man and the benefits He has conferred on him, beginning even before man existed, with prescient love and care. Ponder how all these favours were bestowed on thee, whom He had in His mind whilst executing this work, which He conceived and performed for love of thee. See how He valued thee and how much He has done for thee, and render Him infinite thanks for it, offering thyself heartily to His service.

Second Point.—Consider how God deliberated with Himself as to the creation of man, not making him forthwith by His only word, as He did when giving existence to all other creatures, but taking counsel and saying, "Let us make man to our image and likeness,"¹ showing therein the preference He gave to man over all creatures, and manifesting that he was the work of the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost all concurred in the creation of man, in order that he should know what he owes to all Three, should be grateful to them, and should learn not to undertake anything of importance without first turning

¹ Genesis i.

to Them and consulting Them. Draw hence affections of gratitude to God for the favour He has done thee, and learn not to act inconsiderately and without mature deliberation.

Third Point.—Consider how God formed man, and in him thyself, not as He created the rest of the creatures, but to His own image and likeness, making him, as St. Peter Chrysologus tells us, His vicegerent in the world and His living image, in order that all creatures should respect and obey him. Learn hence, besides the gratitude which thou owest to God, with what respect thou shouldst regard thyself, being the image of God; do not then deface His likeness by vice and guilt, nor despise it, mingling the precious jewel of His resemblance, which He has placed in thee, with the mire of sin, and thus lowering thyself by human vileness from the high estate in which He has placed thee.

Fourth Point.—Contemplate the manner in which God formed man, taking the dust of the earth in His hands, and fashioning his body with such marvellous detail and adjustment, and then giving him breath from His own breath and a soul from His own Spirit;¹ and this in order that he might thus, as it were, derive his parentage from God Himself, Who gave him his rational soul with its three powers, the memory, the understanding, and the will, and an immortal life, as far as the soul is concerned, like unto God. O Lord! what can I render Thee for such numerous and great benefits as I have received from Thy hand? Who am I that Thou shouldst have formed me with Thine own hand? A thousand thanks will I render Thee for so singular a favour, entreating all creatures to unite their voices to praise and bless Thee for all Thy benefits; and of Thee, O Lord, I implore one more favour, namely, grace to serve Thee and to be grateful to Thee as I ought.

¹ St. Basil.

*HUNDRED AND FOURTH MEDITATION.**For the Friday.*ON THE PRIMARY AND FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH OF THE
END OF MAN.

First Point.—Consider how God created thee in order that thou shouldst know Him, reverence Him, and serve Him in this life and enjoy Him in the next ; this is the end and object for which God created thee. Wherein thou shouldst ponder, first, the favour He did thee in giving thee the being thou hast, leaving uncreated an infinite number of creatures more noble and perfect than thou, to whom He might have given existence, which was a most signal favour. Dive deep into this truth, and consider what thou wast before God created thee, and thou wilt find that there is nothing so insignificant which is not greater than thou wast, since all that exists has being and some sort of value, however small it may be, and thou hadst none, and he who had purchased thee, however cheap, had paid too high a price. Behold what thou owest to God, Who drew thee out of nothing, gave thee a rational existence, made thee like unto Himself, and destined thee from that moment to enjoy Him eternally in His kingdom. Ponder, next, that He did not create thee in order that thou shouldst serve creatures, be they kings or princes, angels or seraphim, but in order that thou shouldst serve His Divine Majesty, Who is the Supreme Emperor of heaven and earth, of angels and of men, and to enjoy Him eternally hereafter. See how thou hast served Him until now, and how thou shouldst serve Him henceforth, and implore His holy grace to ensure that result.

Second Point.—Consider how exalted is this last end of thy creation, which is beatitude, and to enjoy God with His angels eternally in heaven. Contemplate the height of the dignity and felicity to which he attains

who reaches it, and the misery of him who fails to secure it, which exceeds all possible and conceivable wretchedness. Then reflect on thyself, and consider that it is possible to lose it, and that many have lost it who have committed fewer sins than thou. What will it profit thee to gain the whole world if thou dost lose thy soul? or what would it matter to thee to lose the whole world if thou lose not heaven? See of what avail is it to Alexander the Great that he made himself the master of the world, now that he is in hell, and will remain there for ever, and all that he gained others have enjoyed already for thousands of years. Ponder how this life is but a vast drama and brief act, in which each performs his part, and when once it is ended all are equal; and that real happiness or misery consists in performing our part well or ill, that is, in succeeding or failing in the ultimate object for which God created us all. Whence thou shouldst derive great contempt of the world, high esteem of heaven, and a yearning desire of securing thy last end, which is beatitude, without ever heeding aught beside.

Third Point.—Consider how God created all things in order that they should assist thee in arriving at this end of serving Him here and enjoying Him hereafter eternally. He did not create them for thee, for thee to enjoy them, taking delight in them for themselves, but in order that thou shouldst use them as means of serving God here now and enjoying Him hereafter. Whence a consequence is to be derived in which it is important to be very solidly grounded, because it is the foundation of the spiritual life—namely, a great indifference of soul in selecting amongst creatures those that may assist thee to secure this end without allowing thyself to be more inclined to those that are more beautiful, or rich, or delightful, or pleasant, than to others, however ugly, distasteful, unpleasant, or toilsome they be. And thus, as far as in thee lies, thou shouldst be as indifferent as the needle of a balance with regard to health or sickness,

poverty or riches, a hard life or a pleasant one, not inclining to one side or the other, desiring and embracing that only which is more conducive to the service of God and to the attainment of the end for which He created thee. This indifference our holy Father St. Ignatius calls the foundation of the spiritual life, and with reason, for thereon the whole edifice rests ; and when this indifference is well established, all that is built thereon is stable and well ordered ; but when it fails through inordinate affection for any creature, everything becomes disordered and misdirected. Wherefore it is important to make a firm resolution to adhere to this indifference, and to implore it of God our Lord in order to serve Him.

Fourth Point.—Reflect on thyself, and see in what condition thou art, and whether, unmindful of this indifference, thou art inordinately attached to the good things of this world, and endeavour to abandon crooked paths and to direct thyself undeviatingly towards thy end. Look on all created things as on a splendid table spread with various viands which God has placed before thee, in order that thou shouldst choose from amongst them those that are wholesome for thee, and shouldst leave those that might injure thee ; and if, for the sake of the health of thy body, thou dost not feed on injurious or poisonous food, but only on such as is useful and profitable, how much more ought thou not to do the like in what concerns the health of thy soul, which is eternal and spiritual ! Consider all things dispassionately, and see what may assist thee to serve the Lord here and enjoy Him hereafter, and resolve in His presence to make use only of these and to eschew all others, and God will help thee with His grace if thou dost seek it, placing thy trust in His goodness, as becomes thee.

HUNDRED AND FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE CREATION AND SIN OF THE ANGELS.

First Point.—Consider how, after creating the heavens, God created the angels in His grace, and adorned them with all natural and supernatural virtue that became them as courtiers of His glory, and a portion of them, vain-glorious and proud on account of the favour that God had done them, ungratefully revolted against Him and refused obedience, and therewith the respect and submission they owed Him. Ponder how much better it had been for them had they been created in a less exalted state, and had less of which to be proud, rather than to have fallen into sin. Acknowledge it to be a mercy of the Lord that He denies thee some of the things thou dost ask for, and gives thee not such eminent talents as others possess, lest they should cause thy destruction. Draw hence, likewise, affections of gratitude and humility, abasing thyself the more at the feet of thy Creator the greater the favours He confers on thee and the more He enriches thee with His grace.

Second Point.—Consider what was the occasion of the fall of the angels, which, according to the most received opinion, was their refusing to acknowledge Christ as superior to themselves, Whose Incarnation and Humanity God revealed to them; and Lucifer, haughty and proud at seeing himself so gifted, so wise, and powerful, ~~esteemed~~ the sacred Humanity and refused to worship It, or acknowledge It as superior to himself, and, as St. John tells us in his Apocalypse,¹ one third of the stars of heaven followed his example. Ponder how great an evil is pride and contempt of others, and, on the contrary, how profitable is humility. See how much harm

¹ Apocalypse xii.

evil example does, and more so when given by the powerful, who shine as stars in the society of men. Beseech God to deliver thee from these vices, and to give thee grace to embrace humility, and never to prefer thyself to any one, but rather to subject thyself to all.

Third Point. — Consider how greatly this sin displeased God, since, though only a sin of thought, and committed by a creature so perfect and so beloved by Him, He at once, and without appeal, expelled from heaven all those who fell into it, subverting their thrones, and, as it were, effacing them from heaven, where, as St. John says, they were seen no more. Draw hence sentiments of fear; first, lest thou fall into sin, seeing that the angels fell; for if spirits so exalted and so prevented by grace yielded, how canst thou trust in thyself, so weak, miserable, and frail, so inclined to evil from thy very conception? Secondly, of fear of the chastisements of God; for if He pardoned not the angels, even less will He pardon thee; and if for one single evil thought He cast them from heaven into hell, what canst thou expect for so many evil thoughts, words, and works? Fear and tremble at the wrath of God, and dare not to offend Him.

Fourth Point. — Consider the rigour with which God punished the angels, and the bitter and prolonged chastisement that He inflicted upon them, because from angels they were changed into demons, and from being the most beautiful, most noble, and most estimable of creatures, they became the most hideous and despicable of the whole world. For God deprived them of all the graces that He had bestowed on them, and of all His assistance for well-doing, leaving them in utter destitution, ignorance, darkness, and obstinacy, without any hope of remedy or escape from their sin, which he has continued to punish already for thousands of years, and will persevere therein without end. Ponder how great is the malice of sin, since God so abhors it, and punishes it with so severe and enduring a chastisement, without

ever relenting. Recognise its malice, and acquire an intense hatred of it, resolving to die a thousand deaths rather than to commit a single mortal sin. On the other hand, consider the mercy that God has shown towards thee in not having cast thee into hell, as He did the angels, although thou hast committed so many sins; but, on the contrary, He has exercised His clemency, awaiting thy repentance, offering thee a remedy by which to arise from sin, to recover His grace, and thereby thy right to heaven. O Lord! what can I render Thee for so signal a mercy? Blessed be Thou a thousand times for having used towards me a mercy which Thou refusedst to the angels! It grieves me, O God, that I have offended Thee. I purpose most firmly rather to die than to sin, to amend my past life, and to employ myself entirely in Thy service.

HUNDRED AND SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost.

ON THE GOSPEL—(LUKE XVI.)

Christ in this Gospel recommends us to gain heaven by almsgiving, after the example of a steward who, when his lord was about to remove him from his stewardship for having dissipated his goods, purchased friends for himself by forgiving his debtors a portion of what they owed, in order that they might receive him into their houses when his master should expel him from his service.

First Point.—Consider, first, how Christ compares thee to a steward of the household of His Lord; for as a steward is not the owner of the goods, but only the administrator thereof, so in like manner thou art not the master of the goods that God has delivered to thy keeping, but only the steward, whose duty it is to distribute

and expend them according to His will, not thine. Therefore take note that He has not intrusted them to thee in order that thou shouldst thereby live luxuriously and triumphantly in the world, but in order to do good to the poor and needy and to spend it in His service. Thou art a steward, not the master; think over this, and implore the grace of God to fulfil thy office efficiently.

Second Point.—Consider that as the day of reckoning came when the master said to his steward, "Give an account of thy stewardship," so likewise will the day come, and perchance very speedily, on which God will say to thee the same words, "Render an account of thy stewardship." O sinner! consider what thou wilt experience when thou hearest that summons! What account wilt thou be able to give of thy whole life, of the evil thou hast done, and of the good thou hast neglected to do, of the talents that God has intrusted to thee, and of the opportunities thou hast had for doing good and winning heaven, of all thy words, works, and thoughts, of every least mirth, of thy property and temporal goods to the last farthing? Lay stress on the severity of the account and the rigour of the Judge, on the malice and pertinacity of the accusers, on the charges that will be brought against thee, and on the importance of the sentence; and do now, whilst thou hast time, what thou wouldst then wish to have done.

Third Point.—Consider those words of Christ as spoken to thine own self in the person of the steward, "Thou canst be steward no longer." Oh, words worthy of deepest consideration, and which thou must necessarily hear when God shall call thee to account, and when the time for negotiating shall be past, in which now, whilst life endures, we can lay up treasures of merit; but the hour of reckoning ~~once~~ arrived, the door is closed, time ceases, the opportunity is past, the season and power of gaining heaven are gone; if thou hast not already won it, thou canst not do so any longer, whatever be thy efforts. Derive hence a high appreciation of the

value of time, which God gives thee in order that thou mayst work out thy salvation and purchase heaven, and a great fervour in labouring therein to heap up immortal wealth before the sun of life goes down and the night of death comes, wherein no man can work.

Fourth Point.—Consider how this steward, finding himself called to account, discovered a remedy in almsgiving, forgave his debtors a part of their debts, and thus secured for himself friends to shelter him in his adversity and receive him into their houses when his master should eject him. Wherein our Redeemer teaches us that by almsgiving and charity we purchase the friendship of God and of His saints, so that when we go out of this world they will receive us into the tabernacles and dwellings of heaven. Ponder this for the profit of thy soul, and consider what utility thou hast derived from the money thou hast spent in banquets, repasts, and other vanities and pomps of the age. All has vanished like smoke, and there only remains remorse of conscience and the account that thou wilt have to render; but what thou hast spent in almsgiving is written in the register of God, and is heaped up in His treasury in order to repay thee with eternal glory. Draw light from this consideration to spend what thou hast left, not in the vanities and superfluities of the world, but in alms and good works, in order thereby to secure the friendship of God and of His saints, who, when thou leavest this life, shall receive thee into the eternal abode.

HUNDRED AND SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE INCONSTANCY OF THE WORLD AND THE
UNCERTAINTY OF LIFE.

First Point.—Consider how Christ compares Himself to a rich man, because such He really is—rich in spiritual

and true wealth, for all the things of this world are false, and no more than shadows. Consider the value of the riches of Christ, how enduring and stable, and then ponder the deceitfulness of earthly wealth and its instability, and resolve, with all the energy of thy soul, to seek the former and to despise the latter.

Second Point.—Consider the inconstancy of this world in what befell this steward ; for being prosperous, rich, and powerful with his master, in a moment, by one turn of the wheel of fortune, he fell from his position, and found himself poor, discredited, abandoned, and persecuted by those who defamed his character with his lord. See thyself in this mirror, and contemplate the inconstancy of the goods of fortune and of the honours of this world, and learn hence not to trust in them, nor to allow thyself to be carried away by their apparent splendour, but to fix the desires of thy heart on God and on eternal things, which are stable and endure for ever.

Third Point.—Consider how this steward was defamed by those of his own household, perchance by his very friends, a practice that is never out of fashion. Consider how little trust can be placed in men, and make thy friends of God and of His Saints, who will always be faithful and never abandon thee. Ponder, on the other hand, how this steward did not turn against his fellow-servants, neither did he complain of those who had spoken evil of him. What a great example of patience ! Draw hence a resolution of practising the like in whatever occasions present themselves, and towards those who persecute and calumniate thee, and implore grace of the Lord to suffer silently, and to return good for evil, according to the teaching of Christ.

Fourth Point.—Consider the words with which Christ concludes this parable : “ Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings.” Ponder what are the dwellings that the heavenly citizens occupy ; compare them with the houses and abodes of the earth,

and thou wilt perceive that the most sumptuous palaces of the world are less than the caverns of wild beasts or mud huts of beggars in their comparison. Behold what folly and blindness is that of the world, which, for things so vile, exchanges such priceless palaces and eternal dwellings of such unutterable value, beauty, grandeur, delight, and satisfaction, and, above all, eternal, which will never end. Ponder deeply this duration, and let not thyself be deceived by the vanity and hollowness of this world, but rather resolve to despise it as vile and perishable, in order to win the immortal dwellings of the heavenly Jerusalem.

HUNDRED AND EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE PREPARATION BY WHICH ETERNAL LIFE IS
SECURED.

First Point.—Consider what St. Austin says, namely. that this householder praised his steward because he had prepared himself for the future without heeding the present, but only providing for that which was to come. O my soul! what praise wouldst thou deserve if thou didst look to the future, which must necessarily come, and didst prepare for thyself an eternal abode! Consider what folly it is of the sons of Adam to spend all their care on the present life that passes away as a wind, and not to think of the future which will endure for ever. They construct sumptuous palaces for this brief life, but they build themselves no dwellings for the life that has no end; they labour and sweat unwearyingly, they traverse sea and land with immense eagerness, in order to secure this world's perishable wealth which others will enjoy, and they have not courage, nor will they exert themselves

at all, to procure those real and immortal riches which they are to enjoy eternally in heaven. Meditate and contemplate the shortness of this life and the length of the next, and how all ends in death, and that after death comes the judgment, then the sentence, and after that eternal life. Behold how important it is to thee to enter into glory; prepare thyself for the future whilst thou hast time, as this steward did, and do now what thou wouldst wish to have done when death shall come.

Second Point.—Consider how this steward prepared himself for the future, namely, by pardoning the injuries he had received from those who had defamed him, by forgiving the debts due to him, and by doing as much good to all as he could, and thereby he recovered the favour of his master and his good name, and secured friends for the future. Take pattern from him, follow his example, and forgive injuries, insults, and debts; do good to all, and especially to those who injure thee, and thou wilt regain what thou hast lost, recover the grace of God, and heap up great merits for a future life.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ says that the children of this world are more prudent in their business and affairs than are the children of God in theirs. Observe what men of the world do in order to succeed in their undertakings to acquire wealth or procure for themselves the honours of the age, and be ashamed that their diligence should exceed thine in seeking after eternal riches. Bewail in the presence of God the blindness of these men and thine own carelessness, and see what answer thou wilt give to God when He weighs thee in the balance with them, and compares the diligence and exactitude with which they serve the world with the negligence and carelessness with which thou dost serve Him. O Lord! judge me now, and let us not await the future. I strike my breast and weep over my negligence and slothfulness in Thy service. I grieve to find myself so idle and negligent in Thy service; do Thou, O Lord, give me fervour, and enkindle Thy love within me,

in order that I may serve Thee with the ardour and diligence that I ought.

Fourth Point.—Consider what St. John Chrysostom meditates, namely, that this steward found his accounts in disorder when he was called upon to render them, because he had spent his time in idleness, and thus he says, “To dig I am not able,” because he had not the habit of labour, and he that labours not in this life will find a great deficit in his accounts for the next. Be warned by this example, and elicit from this meditation firm resolutions of making a good use of time; beg of God His grace to accomplish them, and endeavour to put them in practice forthwith.

HUNDRED AND NINTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON DIVINE AND HUMAN JUDGMENTS.

First Point.—Consider how Christ tells us to prepare ourselves for leaving this life “when you shall fail.” Contemplate that thou must infallibly depart out of this life, and that this departure will take place soon. Behold how little time remains to thee, and that all that is of this world will remain behind; and consider what thou wouldst have to take with thee if God were to call thee now and cite thee to leave at once. Ponder the affliction suffered by the steward when his lord told him that his stewardship was ended; and how, as St. John Chrysostom meditates on this Gospel, it was because he had a bad account to render, and he, with just cause, feared to render it to his lord. Thus do Christians fear and tremble at the hour of death; see, therefore, now, whilst thou hast time, how thou wilt find thyself at that hour, and, since it is inevitable, prepare thyself at once for it.

Second Point.—Consider the trial that this steward underwent in seeing himself accused to his master, and ponder how much worse it will be for a man to be accused before God. Note what enemies thou hast, who are more numerous than the atoms of which the sun is composed, and who cease not to accuse thee and seek to deprive thee of His grace; arm thyself, therefore, with vigilance, prayer, patience, and penance, in order to defend thyself from their attacks before God.

Third Point.—Consider how this householder would not decide against his steward on the accusations made against him, without first giving him a hearing. He called him and questioned him, repeated the charges brought against him, and asked for an account of his stewardship, wherein Christ teaches us to condemn no one without a hearing. Learn hence not to be hasty in thy judgments, nor to condemn others on what is reported of them without first hearing their defence. Beg of God grace to imitate Him in His dealings; ask Him for prudence and discretion to conduct thyself rightly in thine, proceeding with mature deliberation and a straightforward intention in all thy undertakings.

Fourth Point.—Consider how St. Luke says of this steward, that, finding himself called to account and cited by his lord, he entered into consideration and thought within himself what he should do in that plight, and how he could escape from it, and that in this meditation he found an exit and a remedy for his difficulty. Oh, that thou wouldst learn this lesson, and that, setting aside all secular business, thou wouldst enter into thyself, and meditate in thy heart what it behoves thee to do for thy salvation, in order to gain heaven and to secure the favour of God! Withdraw from the bustle of the world and retire with thy God into the secret of thy soul; cry aloud to His Divine Majesty, and implore Him for light to guide thee in all things, for counsel in thy doubts, and for resolution to carry out wisely the business of thy salvation.

*HUNDRED AND TENTH MEDITATION.**For the Thursday.*

ON THE SIN OF THE FIRST MAN.

First Point.—Consider how God, having created man, enriched him with many gifts, as mentioned above, and adding favours to favours, He created woman to be his companion, drawing her from a rib of his side, and giving her to him for his associate, in order that she should assist him to govern and to people the world ; wherein thou hast much to meditate. First, how God created man alone, in order, as St. Austin says, that he should acquire the love of solitude, and should give himself to it from time to time. Secondly, how He gave man a companion, because, as the Holy Spirit says, “It is better to be two together than one alone,” for thus the one assists the other. Beg of God to give thee such society as may assist thee to serve Him, and may not be the cause of thy offending Him, as Eve was to Adam. Thirdly, ponder how God drew the woman from the rib, which is next to the heart, because she and man were to love one another cordially. Oh, that we were all united and bound together with the bond of perpetual charity ! Beseech the Lord to grant thee this charity towards all, and elicit a firm resolution to acquire it and preserve it as far as in thee lies, and likewise a desire to assist thy neighbour to the utmost of thy power and of his need, remembering that God has created thee in this world to be his companion and support, as He created Eve to be the coadjutrix of Adam.

Second Point.—Consider the precept that God imposed upon Adam and Eve of not eating of the “tree of knowledge of good and evil,” whilst allowing them the free use of all the other fruits ; and they were so ungrateful that of this one alone did they eat, transgressing thus the commandment of God. Enter into account

with thyself ; see whether thou hast imitated thy parents, been ungrateful to thy Creator, and broken His commandments, in order to follow thy caprice and to satisfy thy appetites. Consider the number and magnitude of the benefits that thou hast received from His hands, and how ill thou hast repaid them, and weep over thine ingratitude and the offences thou hast committed against God, in the bitterness of thy soul and with contrition of heart.

Third Point.—Consider the wrath that God conceived against our first parents for a fault apparently not very grievous, and the chastisement wherewith He punished it. For He at once called them to judgment, heard them, and condemned them to the loss of their goods and to banishment from paradise. At the same time He deprived them and all their descendants of His grace. They forfeited original justice, the dominion over their passions, the submission to them of inferior creatures ; they remained subject to innumerable miseries, and condemned for ever to hell, and all their descendants are born in the enmity of God. Consider the innumerable sufferings, famines, pests, wars, inundations, and deaths that this sin has brought into the world, how many souls are suffering in hell on account of it, and how many will yet go there ; and such is the malice of this sin, that the Divine justice is not thereby satisfied. Cast thine eyes on Christ crucified, and contemplate what He suffers ; see how it is all caused by the sin of Adam, and endured to redeem us from his sin. Lay stress on the consideration of the gravity and malice of one single sin, and see what God will require for so many sins as thou hast committed, when for one single sin He imposes such grievous and lasting chastisements. Recognise the magnitude of the offence by the severity of the sentence, and humble thyself before the throne of God, imploring the pardon of thy sins, and firmly purposing never to offend Him again in the smallest thing, for the sake of anything that there is or can ever be in the world.

Fourth Point.—Consider the steps by which our first parents fell into sin, in order to avoid the like. The first, as Abbot Rupert says, was the giddiness and freedom of the woman in roaming about and around Paradise; for if she had preserved the retirement which became her sex, she had been shielded from sin. The second was freedom of the tongue, and needless curiosity in entering into conversation with the devil under the form of the serpent. The third was forgetfulness of death, believing what the serpent said, viz., that they would not die, as God had said they would, if they eat of the forbidden fruit. The fourth was the desire for honours, and the ambition of being like unto God, giving credit to the deceitful insinuations of Satan. The fifth was gluttony, yielding to their appetite and eating in contravention of the commandment of God. Contemplate thoughtfully these steps, and implore grace from our Lord to avoid them, and to follow the contrary ones taught us by Christ, in order to walk aright in His service, and to arrive at salvation.

HUNDRED AND ELEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE INFINITE MERCY OF GOD.

First Point.—Having meditated on the justice of God, and seen how He manifested it towards the angels and towards man, and how He exercises it towards sinners, let us now, in order to excite ourselves to confidence in Him, meditate on His infinite mercy which He manifests towards all from the beginning, and will never cease to exhibit towards all generations, and, as David tells us,¹ “from eternity unto eternity.” The first manifestation

¹ Psalm cii.

of this mercy consists in forestalling our miseries, and delivering us from falling into them even before they occur, which is the greatest of all mercies. Ponder how attentive God is to all our needs and weaknesses, and with what pity He regards our shortcomings. Consider what would become of us if He were to remove the sustaining arm of His mercy, and were to leave us to ourselves in our anxieties and trials, whether spiritual or corporal. Place thy hand on thy breast, and consider from how many He has freed thee of which thou art not even aware, forestalling them ere they assailed thee, and render Him infinite thanks for this.

Second Point.—Consider that, as the Book of Wisdom¹ tells us, the mercy of God is on a par with His omnipotence, and consider especially the clemency which He exhibits towards sinners, overlooking their offences, waiting for them to repent, and receiving them with the affection of a Father when they are sorry for their sins. And not only does He forgive them, but, instead of chastising them, He confers many favours upon them, giving them His grace, and therewith the inheritance of heaven, and many spiritual gifts. Praise His compassion; cease not to extol His mercy; entreat Him to manifest it towards thee, and to pardon thy transgressions, and from this meditation derive a great confidence of obtaining the forgiveness of thy sins, however numerous and grievous they may be, since the mercy of God is infinitely greater.

Third Point.—Consider the greatness of the mercy of God, which extends itself to all men, excluding none, even though they may have offended Him unceasingly since they first had the use of reason, and to all sorts of sins, however enormous they may be, and to all places and times, without delay or limit, nor fixing any other condition than that of repentance. “When the wicked man turneth himself away from his wickedness,” God says by Ezechiel, “he shall surely live.”² Consider the in-

¹ Wisdom xi.

² Ezechiel xviii.

numerable infidels throughout the world that are offending Him constantly, and see with what patience God endures them, being able so easily to take vengeance on them. Consider the favours that He bestows on them, the inspirations that He sends them, calling them to repentance in order to forgive them and bestow heaven upon them. O Lord ! how infinite is Thy mercy, how immense Thy compassion ; let me publish it to the whole world, and let all sinners come and partake of it, obtaining the pardon of their sins and thereby eternal beatitude.

Fourth Point.—Consider what mercy God manifests towards the just and His elect, predisposing them from their infancy by infinite graces in order that they should not fall into sin, accompanying and following them with this grace all through life with infinite favours, and at last setting the seal on all His mercies with the crown of glory. Rest thine eyes on St. John the Baptist and on Jeremias, whom He sanctified from their mother's womb, and consider the mercies that God bestowed on them from that time up to the last moment of their lives, contemplate particularly those which He conferred upon the most Holy Virgin from the first instant of her conception up to the moment of her glorious assumption into heaven, and thou wilt find that there was no instant or moment in which God was not taking pains to embellish that soul with the riches of His mercies. Rejoice to possess so merciful and generous a God ; acquire courage from the knowledge of His clemency ; strengthen thyself by His omnipotence, and entreat Him to make use towards thee of the same pity that He uses towards His elect, and that He leave thee not empty Who fills all creatures with His mercies.

*HUNDRED AND TWELFTH MEDITATION.**For the Saturday.*ON THE INFINITE LIBERALITY OF GOD TOWARDS ALL
CREATURES.

First Point.—Consider the infinite liberality of God, which consists in continually giving to His creatures immense gifts and graces without owing them anything nor expecting any return or profit from them. Repass in thy mind all the gifts of nature and of grace that God bestows on all, and especially those that He has granted to thee. Behold how generous He has shown Himself and does daily show Himself, and how bound therefore thou art to serve Him and to be generous towards Him. Return Him many thanks for all this, and renew thy resolution of serving Him.

Second Point.—Consider the second point wherein His liberality is manifested, namely, in the quality of the gifts that He bestows on man. For they are such that a single degree of grace is of greater value than all the treasures of the world, and the generosity of God is such that He even gives Himself, His Son, and the Holy Ghost, and His Body and Blood in sacrifice and as food, and lastly, as a reward to be eternally enjoyed in bliss. Learn to be generous towards God, to give Him all that thou hast and all that thou art, thy body, thy blood, thy soul, and all thy powers to be employed in His holy service.

Third Point.—Consider the third manner in which His generosity shines forth, namely, in giving to all without any exception, most equally, as far as His will is concerned, and learn to be generous towards thy neighbour, not limiting thyself to this one or that from love or affection to any in particular.

Fourth Point.—The fourth quality of this generosity of God's is that He gives without owing, and without

expecting payment from creatures; for he that gives what he owes or sells for the sake of profit cannot be termed generous. Ponder within thyself this perfection of God, and derive thence a firm resolution of being very generous towards Him, not confining thyself to what thou owest in regard to precepts, but performing moreover in His service works of supererogation for His glory's sake, without any view to recompense, in order that He may be generous towards thee according as thou art generous towards Him.

HUNDRED AND THIRTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost.

ON THE GOSPEL—(LUKE XIX.)

St. Luke tells us how Christ, going up to Jerusalem and contemplating the city, wept over its coming destruction, which was present to His mind, and how entering into the Temple, He cast out thence those who profaned it with their traffic.

First Point.—Consider how St. Luke says that Christ, whilst ascending triumphantly into Jerusalem in the midst of the acclamations of the people, wept bitterly over the future destruction of the city. In which thou mayst perceive how little He took to heart worldly honours, and how His whole mind was occupied with spiritual and divine things, with the glory of God and the welfare of souls, the loss of which He wept whilst in the very midst of human applause, His desire for our good affecting Him more than His personal interest. O Father, Who art truly a Father to Thy children! See how much thou dost owe Him, since He can take no delight in all the pleasures of the world apart from thine advantage, which is to Him of greater moment than the highest

honour that can be paid Him. Whence do thou learn to have no other interest than His honour and glory, no other pleasure than His, nor to take delight in anything of all that the world worships apart from the service of God. O my soul ! if thou couldst but arrive at the comprehension of this heavenly philosophy, and didst fix thy whole heart on God and eternal treasures, detaching it from the perishable ones of the earth, what peace wouldst thou acquire, and how tenderly would the Lord love thee ! Beg of Him grace to love Him with all thy strength, and to have no other employment than the procuring of His honour and glory and the accomplishment of His will.

Second Point.—Consider how lively was the grief of the heart of our Saviour whilst contemplating as already present the calamity which threatened that noble city, and how it drew from His eyes streams of tears. Let them not fall to the earth ; gather up those precious pearls, and with them purify thy heart. Christ sheds them in order to wash therewith the sins of Jerusalem ; but thine also were present to His mind. Implore Him to wash and purify thee from the stains that defile thee. Comfort thy weeping Lord by a sincere avowal of thy guilt, born of earnest contrition for thy sins, for that is the greatest consolation thou canst afford Him. Bewail thy sins and those of all men : weep with them that weep, and compassionate thy Redeemer.

Third Point.—Meditate the motives that Christ had for His grief, of which the first was that He was not known, and that His doctrine was rejected at the time of His visitation, Jerusalem remaining blind and in darkness in the midst of so much light. Oh, how often dost thou give Him cause for tears when He visits thee by His inspirations, and calls at the door of thy heart by means of His preachers and prelates, and those who enlighten thee by their examples, to withdraw thee from the obscurity of thy sins and introduce thee to the light of God ; and thou dost despise His visits and art deaf to His voice, more hardened and obdurate than was Jeru-

saalem at the time of His preaching. Behold God weeps over thee; dry up His tears and give Him no further cause for sorrow; arise from the blindness in which thou livest and be converted to God.

Fourth Point.—The second motive for Christ's sorrow was the calamity which threatened that noble city, which was to be destroyed, so that of all its edifices there was not to remain a stone upon a stone, and the Redeemer so compassionated its ruin that He shed from His innermost heart torrents of tears. Ponder here how much more worthy of tears is the loss of a soul redeemed by the Blood of Christ than the ruin of a material city; and if the Saviour weeps over the ruin of Jerusalem, how much more does He weep over thy soul, which is threatened with a far worse calamity on account of thy vices and sins! Christ wept whilst Jerusalem rejoiced, and thou art gay whilst Christ weeps over thee. Pause a while and weep over thy perdition; bewail thy blindness, and consider that it is such as to cost thy Redeemer tears. Cast thyself at His feet, entreat His pardon, bemoan thy sins with true contrition, and thou wilt assuage His grief, give Him cause for joy, rejoice the angels, and save thyself from destruction.

HUNDRED AND FOURTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE LIFE TO COME.

First Point.—Gaze on the tears that Christ sheds, and hearken to the words that fall from His lips, wherein He expresses the cause of His grief: "If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace; but now they are hidden from thy eyes. For the days shall come upon thee: and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee and compass thee round,

and straiten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee, and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone, because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation." Observe and meditate one by one all the words of thy Redeemer; He first bewails the blindness of Jerusalem, which sees not the evils that threaten her, carried away as she is by present pleasures and entangled in temporal interests and profits. O Lord! what great cause hast Thou to weep to-day over so many persons who remember not the future, preoccupied as they are with present advantages, who lift not their eyes to see the calamities that threaten them, and, inebriated with the wine of temporal goods, like brute animals, think only of what they have at hand, forgetful of the time to come. O my soul! open thine eyes, and be not dazzled with the tinsel that glitters in the tents of this world. Look to the future, consider in time the pitfalls into which thou mayst be lead and the calamity that threatens thee, in order that the Lord may not have to bewail thy blindness and misery as He did that of Jerusalem.

Second Point.—Consider what was the calamity that threatened Jerusalem, and what is that which threatens thee; for, according to St. Gregory, the disaster that threatened Jerusalem was the destruction that it suffered forty years later under Titus and Vespasian, who levelled it to the ground, ruining it, and killing or carrying into captivity all its inhabitants; and the calamity which threatens thee is hell for ever. Jerusalem was surrounded by men, her enemies, and thou wilt be surrounded by the devils, the principal enemies of thy soul. Jerusalem was beaten flat to the ground, and thou wilt be cast down into hell; in the one case all the inhabitants were carried away captive into other lands; in thine the devils will bind thee and conduct thee into the eternal dungeons. That captivity had an end and that ruin a limit, but thine will have neither end nor remedy. Oh, that thou didst know the calamity that threatens thee on account

of thy sins, and that, considering how terrible and frightful it is, thou didst forthwith exert thyself to avert it! Beseech of God light to know it, prudence to forestall it, and His grace to exchange this peril for the happiness of heaven.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ says of Jerusalem, “This thy day.” O my soul! thy day will also soon be past and that of God will come: thine is the one He grants thee wherein to work according to thy free will, whatever that will chooses; and His day will be that in which He will no longer allow thee to labour and to walk according to thy choice, and when the time of meriting will be no more. Behold how rapidly all things pass away and that time flows on like a river, the water of which never returns; so neither does the day that is past. This is thy day, because God grants it to thee therein to labour well and earn heaven, and the morrow will be the day of God, in which He will call thee to give an exact account of all things. Wherefore see how thou livest, and what will become of thee in that tremendous day of the Lord.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ laments the peace that Jerusalem was enjoying in foolish delights and amusements with such security, and as little heed of what threatened her as though she had no enemies nor had deserved so great a chastisement. Bewail with Christ the peace that men at the present day enjoy in their sins, which is their greatest calamity; for their conscience reproaches them not, nor does it destroy their slumber, nor do they dread anything, and whilst their sins condemn them to hell, they have no anxiety or care on the subject. The reason thereof is, that they give no thought to it, and there is nothing of which they are so forgetful as their end and final abode, which is that of which they should be most mindful. Entreat the Lord to send men into the world who shall arouse it and warn and prepare men for their last end, and be not thou of those who live deceived and wedded to their sins and vices in peace and tranquillity.

HUNDRED AND FIFTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON CHRIST'S ZEAL FOR THE HOLY TEMPLE AND FOR THE
GLORY OF GOD.

First Point.—Consider how Christ manifested His zeal for the glory of God and the honour of His holy Temple by going straight into the Temple, and with great authority and determination casting out those who profaned it with secular traffic of buying and selling. Ponder how greatly God is offended by the profanation of His holy Temple, and how zealous Christ was that due honour and veneration should be paid to it. Derive hence sentiments of reverence and resolutions of worshipping God in His temples, of being zealous for the sacred worship as far as in thee lies, never permitting it to be profaned by any one, least of all by thy own actions, for these at least are under thy control.

Second Point.—Consider those words of the Saviour, "My house is the house of prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves." In which He teaches us that the church is a place dedicated to prayer to God, and not to be used for purposes of trade; to so use it is in a manner to rob God of His own. If thou be an ecclesiastic, learn hence not to make use of the church as a means of increasing thy revenue, nor of heaping up wealth, but to pray to God for the people and for thyself, giving Him thanks, soliciting His graces, and securing favours from His hand for all; and if thou dost otherwise, fear His indignation and the chastisement of His arm.

Third Point.—Search thine own breast, and consider how thou hast profaned the temple of thy soul, in which God implanted His image, therein to dwell, and there to be adored and served by thee. Thou hast profaned it by

setting up therein the idols of thy honour, thy pleasures, and riches; thou hast profaned it with sales, and purchases, and secular business, more grievously than these people whom Christ cast out of the material Temple of Jerusalem, and thou dost deserve greater chastisement than they. Bewail thy sins, and beg of God to visit thy soul as a pitiful Father, not as a rigorous Judge; beseech Him to cleanse it from the dross of sin, and from everything that is displeasing in His sight, or that offends His Divine Majesty.

Fourth Point.—Consider and thoughtfully ponder how that Temple was the type and figure of the Humanity of the Saviour, Whom the Jews insulted with so many grievous wrongs, whilst He wept over their sins and consequent ruin; and do thou also bewail how little known our Saviour is by men, how unworthily He is treated by heretics, and yet more so by bad Christians. Implore the Lord to put a remedy to so many evils, and to grant thee grace not to fall into the like, but to treat Him with reverence, and to serve Him as thou shouldst.

HUNDRED AND SIXTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE PERFECTION OF THE WORKS OF GOD.

First Point.—Consider the use that God made of His omnipotence, which was to communicate His goodness to creatures, to give them being, and make them participators of His power and of the infinite perfections of His nature. Whence thou shouldst learn not to use the power that He may have accorded to thee in works of vainglory, ostentation, and worldly pomp, but rather in doing good to all, and especially to the more poor and needy. Give many thanks to the Lord for the favours He has conferred on thee in particular, whereby thou art the more bound to serve Him, and solicit His grace to

aspire to copy Him as far as thy weakness permits thee to imitate His perfection.

Second Point.—Consider what the sacred text tells us,¹ namely, that after creating each thing God contemplated it again, and examined it to see that it was good. Not that His works needed revision, nor that He required to contemplate them in order to know what manner of thing they were, but in order to teach us to examine our works and review ourselves in them, endeavouring to perfect them by removing the dross that our contact communicates to them, so as to give them the finish of perfection. Draw hence a resolution of examining thine actions and improving them as much as thou canst, reviewing thy manner of prayer, thy confessions and communions, the performance of thy devotions, hearing of mass, daily examinations, and the duties of thy state, striving to accomplish all with perfection.

Third Point.—Consider how the sacred text adds, “And God saw *all* the things (at once) that He had made, and they were very good.” In the first review He found them to be good, and in the second very good, so improved and perfected that they were superlatively very good. Whereof the holy Doctors give two reasons, drawn from the very words of the text. The first, that God improved and perfected them by His review, and by casting His eyes upon them; for such is the regard of God that it perfects those on whom it is cast. Implore Him to look down upon thee, to perfect thee by His gaze, and to cleanse thy soul from all that is hateful in His sight, in order that He may never withdraw His eyes from thee. Secondly, because He saw them altogether, and their harmonious assemblage gave them an increased perfection and beauty in His sight over that which each possessed in itself. Whence thou shouldst draw, for the profit of thy soul, to follow the community in all things, to avoid singularity, and to associate thyself with the good, whose virtue may supply what

¹ Genesis i.

is wanting in thee, and so thou be pleasing in the sight of God.

Fourth Point.—Consider how all things have remained in the perfection in which God created them, man only excepted, who fell away by sin in Paradise. Repass briefly in review the heavens, the sun, moon, and stars, the four elements, the birds, the fish, and animals, and so with the rest, and thou wilt find them in the same degree of essential perfection in which God created them. Man alone has lost it, since he separated himself from the Divine Will. Place thy hand on thy breast; reflect on thyself, and see whether thou dost possess the degree of perfection which God requires of thee, and blush in His presence to perceive that irrational and senseless creatures have the advantage over thee in this respect, and leave thee behind, for they have preserved the perfection that God bestowed on them, and thou hast not done so; excite thyself to the recovery of it by the grace of the Lord. Ponder, with St. Ambrose, that God praised all creatures after He had created them, with the exception of man, because the perfection of the other creatures consists in their exterior, and therefore on beholding them He praised them; but man's perfection is interior and not visible. Whence thou shouldst learn not to be solicitous for exterior beauty, but for the interior comeliness of the soul, which is what God requires of thee. Humble thyself in His presence, and beseech Him to perfect thee with His divine hands, for He knows that thou canst not do it with thine, for thou hast not of thyself either strength or virtue.

HUNDRED AND SEVENTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE REPOSE OF GOD AFTER THE CREATION.

First Point.—"And He (God) rested on the seventh day," says the sacred text, "from all the work which He

had done; and He blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it." Wherein thou shouldst ponder, first, that it is not said that God rested until He had terminated all the works that He had resolved to execute, and having finished them, He rested, to show us that we shall not find rest until we have finished and put the last stroke to all that God has appointed for us to do, nor until all our duties have been accomplished; but this done, we shall find repose. Attend to the fulfilment of thy duty, and to the performance of all that God has committed to thee; be diligent in performing it, and thou wilt find rest for thy heart; but if thou dost not accomplish thy duty, thou wilt never find repose; on the contrary, thou wilt constantly be assailed by anxiety, affliction, fear, and remorse of soul.

Second Point.—Consider wherein God took His rest, not *in* the works He had done, as St. Austin remarks, but apart from them: "*From all the works He had done,*" not *in* them. So that God in a manner withdrew and abstained from them, and thus reposed in Himself, in Whom alone true rest is to be found. O soul created for God! learn this lesson which He gives thee from the beginning of the world; and if thou wouldst find rest, seek it not in creatures, but in the Creator. Thou wilt find repose in God and with God; and the more thou withdrawest from creatures, the better wilt thou unite thyself with Him, and the greater rest wilt thou find.

Third Point.—Consider how the sacred text says that God blessed and sanctified that seventh day, because the blessing of God and His grace sanctify souls and make them agreeable to His Divine Majesty and heirs of His glory. Great peace wilt thou find and extreme felicity if thou dost obtain that blessing. Beseech the Lord to grant it to thee, and therewith the heirship of eternal wealth.

Fourth Point.—Consider how God sanctified this day, and what reasons He had for sanctifying it, namely, by suspending all exterior action, and devoting Himself to

the contemplation of Himself. Thus are we to keep holy the feasts and such days as God has chosen and set aside for His worship and service, abstaining from all work and corporal labour, and dedicating ourselves to prayer and the contemplation of divine things. Draw hence a salutary lesson for the sanctification of feast days, after the example of thy Creator, spending them in good works conducive to His honour and service, and profitable to thy soul. And with regard to the reasons He had, they were:—First, His honour and glory, in order that thou shouldst dedicate thereunto one day of the many thou dost spend on secular concerns. Secondly, in order that that seventh day should be a type of the beatitude which will follow after the labours of this life, and which will be complete repose. Thirdly, in order to symbolise the day of His Resurrection, on which He rested from the labours He had undergone for our redemption and that of the world, and which He was to sanctify and order to be kept holy by the faithful in memory of so signal a benefit; and the Lord chose to give us Himself the example of what He was going to command by practising it first Himself. Meditate attentively on all this, and draw hence motives and instruction for the service of God, exciting thyself to zeal for His glory and worship, and to gratitude for His benefits, bearing them in mind, sanctifying the days dedicated to His service, and expecting the repose of His eternal glory after the trials of this life are over.

HUNDRED AND EIGHTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE BENEFIT OF PRESERVATION.

First Point.—Consider that, as God created thee by His infinite power and wisdom, so in like manner does

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He preserve thee, and give thee from hour to hour the being that thou hast, sustaining the first benefit, and renewing it daily for thy preservation. Consider all that thou owest to the Lord, how ill thou hast corresponded to such great mercy, and how thou shouldst show thy gratitude for the future.

Second Point.—Consider that not only does God preserve thee by His infinite power, but He likewise preserves all creatures, in order that they may serve thee and preserve thy life, for if they failed thou couldst not continue to exist. Thus the air thou breathest, the water thou drinkest, the bread thou eatest, the health thou enjoyest, the clothes wherewith thou art covered, the house thou dost inhabit, all are benefits which come to thee from the hand of thy Creator. Ponder here how thou hast used them to assist thee in promoting His service, since whilst He confers such favours on thee thou dost offend Him ; extol His infinite bounty, and His patience in bearing with thee and conferring favours upon thee ; give Him a thousand thanks for them, and purpose amendment for the future.

Third Point.—Consider how thou dost depend on thy Creator, for thou canst not raise a hand without His assistance, and unless He acts in unison with thee, concurring with His co-operation in all thy actions. Abase thyself in His presence, acknowledging thy nothingness, and that all thou dost possess comes from His hand, and is the work of His omnipotence. Humble thyself to the earth, and beseech Him not to leave thee to thine own misery and nothingness, but rather to shelter and protect thee with His right hand, lest thou fall into an abyss of sin.

Fourth Point.—Consider the many benefits that are included in this benefit of preservation ; for, without thy being aware of it, God preserves thee from many sicknesses which would destroy thy life. He protects thee from many enemies, from falling into the hands of robbers, and from the disastrous accidents in which others

travelling with thee have perished. Cast thine eyes on the past, and consider how many of thy fellow-students, brethren, and associates thou hast seen carried to the grave. Again, behold the illnesses and trials that others endure, and how many are in want of the very necessities of life, and recognise in all these things the benefits that come to thee from the hand of God, to Whom thou shouldst show gratitude for them, acknowledging in all things His infinite goodness and the immense love that He bears thee, and desiring to render Him love for love.

HUNDRED AND NINETEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE LOVE OF GOD TOWARDS HIMSELF AND TOWARDS
MAN.

First Point.—Consider how God loves Himself infinitely, because as goodness is the object and cause of love, and the goodness of God is infinite, so God loves Himself with an infinite love ; on the one hand, because this love proceeds from Himself, and on the other, because His goodness, being essentially Himself, obliges Him to delight and take complacency in Himself and in all His perfections and greatness. For all which I will rejoice and glorify God above all that is created, because He is so good, so holy, so perfect, and so worthy of being loved, and I will call on all creatures to rejoice in God, and to praise and glorify Him unceasingly.

Second Point.—Consider the love that God bears towards all creatures which possess a spark of His goodness, and especially towards man, who is His image ; and that, as it is natural to love one's own likeness, so God loves man with an especial affection, because of the likeness that man bears to Him. Consider who God is

and who man is, that God should love him and manifest His good will towards him. For whilst, on the one hand, we consider the littleness of man, and on the other, the infinite greatness of God, His bounty is more clearly manifested to our view, and affords us fresh motive for admiration and for praising Him, that He is so good, so holy, so generous, so bounteous, and so willing to do good. Praise and extol His love, and beseech the angels and all creatures to assist thee in blessing and glorifying Him for ever.

Third Point.—Consider that this love of God does not confine itself to good will only, but it extends itself to works, the Lord conferring on thee many and great benefits for the sake of the love that He bears thee. Pass in review the general benefits of creation, preservation, redemption, &c., and the particular ones that thou receivest continually from the hand of God, and recognise them all as the effects of His love. Let His works discover to thee the love of that Heart which never ceases to do thee good, because it ceases not to love thee, nor ever will for all eternity, and derive hence sentiments of everlasting gratitude to Him to Whom thou art so indebted, and of immense love, never allowing thy will any other occupation than God and the accomplishment of His will and pleasure.

Fourth Point.—Turn thine eyes on thyself, and see what return of love thou dost make to thy Creator for that which He bears thee, and by what works thou dost show thy gratitude for the favours that thou daily receivest from His hand. Weep over thy ingratitude, that, instead of repaying Him by faithful service, thou hast repaid Him by offences, which is the highest degree of ingratitude. Bewail that which thou hast shown Him until now, and inflame thy heart with a lively love for God, resolving to testify it, as far as thou art able, by fidelity in His service.

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DAILY MEDITATIONS.

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DAILY MEDITATIONS
ON THE
MYSTERIES OF OUR HOLY FAITH

AND ON THE
LIVES OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST
AND OF THE SAINTS.

Fourth Part

CONTAINS
FROM THE TENTH TO THE TWENTY-FOURTH WEEKS AFTER
PENTECOST.

TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH

OF

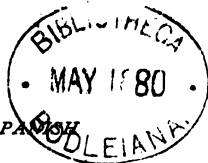
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GEORGIUS PORTER, Soc. Jes.

Imprimatur.

✠ HENRICUS EDWARDUS,
Card. Archiep. Westmonast.

DAILY MEDITATIONS.

FIRST MEDITATION.

For the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

ON THE GOSPEL—(LUKE XVIII.)

CHRIST in the Gospel for this Sunday exhorts to humility by the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, who went up into the Temple to pray—the former coming away condemned for his pride, the latter justified on account of his humility ; “ because every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

First Point.—Consider that, as St. Luke tells us, Christ spoke this parable “ to some who trusted in themselves as just, and despised others.” Wherein ponder how sad is the perdition of a person who has led a good life, and been commonly considered one of the just, who has occupied himself in good and holy works, and shunned vice, and yet who ends his life in hell, forfeiting the fruit of all the good he has done, which is the most lamentable of losses. Behold how one of the twelve Apostles lost his soul, how one of the seven deacons was also condemned. Reflect on the five virgins, who, after a life of mortification and chastity, were excluded at last from salvation, and on the examples of others, who, after

many years of serving God and the performance of many good works, have lost their souls; and fear to fall, like them, into the abyss of perdition. Observe how they lost themselves, and beseech God to hold thee by the hand, lest thou follow them and lose thy soul.

Second Point.—Consider how this Pharisee went astray through pride and presumption of his own strength, and the publican recovered grace by his humility, acknowledging himself to be a sinner, and unworthy to raise his eyes to heaven. Enter into account with thyself; see which of the two thou dost imitate, the vainglorious Pharisee or the humble publican, and henceforth shun the steps of the former to follow those of the latter, if thou wouldst please God and achieve salvation.

Third Point.—Consider that no sinner should be despised, because we know not what God reserves for him, or whether he may not in the future receive such graces as shall cause him to be preferred to many of the just, who were formerly esteemed better than he. Witness this publican, whom God called and assisted to escape from his sins, and to be preferred to the Pharisee, who was held by all to be a saint. Learn hence not to despise any one, however bad he may seem; for thou knowest not what his end will be, nor whether it may not be preferable to that of many who now serve God and are thought holy.

Fourth Point.—Meditate these words, with which Christ winds up His parable, "Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted;" because God resists the proud and gives His grace to the humble. Pride is the offspring of Lucifer, and humility the child of Christ. Pride emptied the thrones of heaven, whilst humility peoples them anew. Fix thine eyes on the humility of Christ, and learn to be meek and humble of heart, and God will exalt thee as He did Him, and will give thee a reward proportionate to thy merit.

*SECOND MEDITATION.**For the Monday.*

ON SELF-CONTEMPT AND ESTEEM FOR OTHERS.

First Point.—Consider that Christ addressed this parable to those who trusted in themselves and despised others, because, as pride is the source of all evils, so on the contrary the root of all solid virtue is humility, which consists in self-knowledge and self-contempt. Consider how little thou canst do of thyself, since of thyself thou hast not strength for even the smallest act of virtue, but only for sin; and that if God were to withdraw His hand, there is no sort of wickedness of which thou art not capable, nor any species of sin into which thou wouldst not fall. Fathom this mine of reflections, and penetrate deeply into the knowledge of thyself. Trust not in thine own strength, but rather, recognising thy misery, humble thyself before God, implore His grace, without which thou canst do nothing, and place thy confidence in His bounty.

Second Point.—Consider how the Pharisees, considering their good works and beholding the evil deeds of others, became vainglorious, esteeming themselves and despising their neighbour. They thus fell into pride on account of that which should have excited them to greater humility, acknowledging that their good works were from God. For this pride it is that Christ reproves them, because as blind men they perceived not the truth, nor knew that their strength came from God. Turn thine eyes on thyself, and see whether thou dost fall into this species of pride, deriving vanity and self-esteem from thy works and despising thy neighbour, when thou shouldst be all the more humble because of the favours that God confers on thee, which, if granted to another, would avail more for the service of God. Consider thy

transgressions and the sins thou dost commit each day ; acknowledge that but for the Divine mercy thou wouldst fall into an infinitely greater number ; and learn to despise no one, for none is so deserving of contempt as thyself.

Third Point. — Consider how different are the judgments of God from those of man, since this Pharisee, who was a saint in the eyes of men, was judged by God to be wicked and a sinner, whilst the publican, who was held to be a sinner, was judged to be a saint by the same tribunal ; for man forms his opinion on what appears exteriorly, but God knows the interior of the heart. Oh, how different is the opinion of God concerning thee from that of men ! Consider how God searches into thy heart, and see how He judges thee, who is the true Judge, that appreciates things at their real value. Take no heed of the opinion of men, whose criterion is not trustworthy and their judgments false, and thou wilt acquire peace and humility, and, ignoring the judgment of God concerning others, thou wilt despise no one.

Fourth Point. — Consider that the Pharisee fell because he contemplated his good works, taking pride in them, whilst the publican recovered grace by the contemplation of his sins, which inspired him with so great a contempt for himself that he held himself unworthy to raise his eyes to heaven. Learn this lesson, and consider not thy good works, lest thou take pride in them, like the Pharisee, and be lost ; but fix thine eyes on thy sins, abasing thyself on their account, and thou wilt acquire humility whereby to secure heaven, even though thou may have been a sinner.

THIRD MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE CONDEMNATION OF THE PHARISEE, AND THE
CAUSES THEREOF.

First Point.—Consider, for the good of thy soul, the causes of the condemnation of this Pharisee, a Religious of those days. The first cause, as Theophilus says, was pride, not only in his heart, esteeming himself and despising others, as we have said, but also in action, going up to the first place in the Temple, near to the altar, as one favoured of God, standing instead of kneeling, with pride and ostentation born of the presumption that filled his soul. This was the first cause of his perdition. Place thy hand on thy breast and see whether it exists in thee. If so, pluck it out, and beg of God not to let thee fall into interior and exterior presumption like this Pharisee.

Second Point.—The second cause was that indicated by St. Luke in the words “apud se orabat;” *he prayed with himself*, not with God, because, as St. Thomas remarks, after St. Basil, instead of praising God, he praised himself, boasting of his good works, attributing them to his own strength, and not to the grace of the Lord. And this he did not only in his heart, but also externally, and in so loud a voice as to be audible to all, so that, as St. Chrysostom observes, the publican at the bottom of the Temple heard him : all of which so offended the Divine Majesty of God, that he was expelled from the Divine presence and fell into disgrace. Take warning by his misfortune ; learn to bless God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with thy whole being ; to hide thy good works and not to boast of them, acknowledging them to be all favours from the Lord.

Third Point.—The third cause of the condemnation

of the Pharisee was, that although he did perform good works, it was from the bad motive of procuring thereby popular applause and the reputation of sanctity and justice, and not in order to glorify God alone. An ill-directed intention is like a worm which eats into the heart of the most exalted cedar tree ; it destroys the merit of the holiest and most meritorious actions. Learn hence in all thine actions to direct thy intention to God, not seeking anything else in their performance but His greater honour and glory, in order not to lose them and thyself, as did this vainglorious Pharisee.

Fourth Point.—The fourth reason, St. Austin tells us, was because he condemned everybody else in the world except himself ; for such says the Saint is the meaning of those words : “Non sum sicut cæteri hominum,” — “I am not like the rest of men ;” excepting none, preferring himself to all other men in the world and notably to the publican who prayed near him. St. John Chrysostom remarks that the Pharisee spoke ill of all, as well of those present as of the absent, censuring them as adulterers, thieves, unjust, and sinners, in order that, by the consideration of their crimes, his works should shine forth the more : wherein he revealed the poison that was in his breast, for the truly righteous man speaks ill of himself and well of all others. Oh, my soul ! fall not into this precipice, into which thou seest others fall ; turn away from the road that conducts them to perdition ; take warning by their errors ; learn to speak well of all and ill of thyself, judging all to be good and thyself alone to be wicked and a sinner, as in truth thou art in the sight of God.

FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE JUSTIFICATION OF THE PUBLICAN.

First Point.—Having already seen the steps by which the Pharisee fell, consider now those by which the publican was justified, in order that, avoiding the former, thou mayst follow the latter, securing thereby the grace of the Lord and thy salvation. And first consider that humility made a saint of this publican, whilst pride made a publican of the saint; for the first step on the road to heaven is this: to humble oneself in the very dust of the earth in the presence of God. Thus the publican entering the Temple to pray, and holding himself to be unworthy to be there and to appear in the presence of God, remained at the lowest place, far off from the altar; and the more he withdrew in body the nearer he approached in soul to God, and the nearer God, to whom his prayer was most pleasing, approached to him; for, as we are told in Ecclesiasticus,¹ “The prayer of him who humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds.” Such, then, was the first step taken by this sinner towards justification. It is also the first thou shouldst take in order to obtain the forgiveness of thy sins and the grace of God.

Second Point.—Secondly, the publican dared not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, partly because of the shame inspired by the recollection of his sins, partly because, as Theophilus says, those eyes which had been turned to earth had been contaminated by earthly affections, and were not worthy of looking up to heaven. Moreover, the publican was desirous of mortifying those members of his body which had offended God, and of purifying them in the fire of penance in order to render them worthy of serving Him. Take note of the instruc-

¹ Eccles. xxxv.

tion afforded thee by this action, and derive thence a resolution of mortifying thy passions, and the eyes, tongue, and other senses and members of thy body which have been the instruments of vice, in order that, purified in the crucible of mortification, they may be made worthy to appear before God, and may assist thee to serve Him and achieve thy salvation.

Third Point.—Consider how the publican struck his breast in the energy of his contrition. First, in order to arouse and stimulate his heart with the stimulus of penance, and likewise, as Theophilus says, in order to chastise it as far as he could for the evil thoughts and desires it had engendered, and also because he chose to mortify himself both interiorly and exteriorly, that he might cleanse his soul more perfectly and appear the more pure before God. Oh, my soul! that thou didst learn this lesson, and didst purify the interior of thy soul and all its powers, thy memory, thy understanding, and thy will, and the most secret recesses of thy heart, as this publican did, in order to be agreeable in the sight of thy God. Form, therefore, most firm resolutions of imitating him in this and in his other virtues, and beg of God grace to accomplish them and to put them all into practice.

Fourth Point.—Fourthly, the publican acknowledged and confessed himself to be a sinner before God and man; for, as St. Chrysostom says, he heard the insulting words of the Pharisee, and not only did he endure them with patience, but he avowed himself guilty, saying publicly that he was a sinner. And, as St. Austin says, God pardons the sinner who recognises himself to be such: “Ignoscit, quando ipse se agnoscit;” so great is the power of humble confession before His tribunal. Learn to acknowledge and confess thy sins with true contrition, in order that God may forgive thee and admit thee to His favour. Say and repeat frequently to God with this publican: “Deus propitius esto mihi peccatori,”—“Lord, be merciful to me a sinner;” and confide in His mercy for forgiveness.

*FIFTH MEDITATION.**For the Thursday.*

ON THE PRAYER OF THE PHARISEE AND ON THAT OF THE
PUBLICAN.

First Point.—St. Gregory, discoursing on this Gospel, says that Christ our Lord teaches us in this parable how we are to formulate our petitions to God in order to secure for them a favourable hearing at His tribunal. It is, therefore, advisable that thou shouldst meditate the conditions that distinguish each of these two sorts of prayer, in order to learn to avoid the faults of the Pharisee, and to imitate the virtues displayed in that of the publican, and to obtain thus what thou dost solicit. First, Christ tells us that they both went up to the Temple to pray, because the Temple is the house of prayer; wherein thou shouldst learn the place suitable for prayer, namely, the church, and such places as are set aside for the purposes of Divine worship, withdrawn from the bustle and traffic of the age, for more especially there does God hearken to and grant the petitions of men. Learn hence the respect thou shouldst manifest for churches and for houses of prayer, and endeavour to withdraw there to pray, setting aside all exterior affairs, however praiseworthy.

Second Point.—Consider the exterior posture of the Pharisee and that of the publican, each the effect of the interior disposition of their soul. The Pharisee stood quite upright, near the altar, very proud and self-satisfied; the publican, on the contrary, remained afar off, humbled exteriorly and interiorly, to such an extent that he dared not even raise his eyes from the ground; and thus was his petition heard. Whence thou hast to learn the modesty and humility, both interior, of the soul, and exterior, of the bodily posture, with which thou shouldst pray in order that thy prayer may be acceptable.

Third Point.—The publican accompanied his prayer with acts of penance, striking his breast and lacerating his flesh ; but not so the Pharisee ; and thus the prayer of the former was accepted, and that of the latter repulsed. Oh, that thou didst know how to petition God with thy lips, and compel Him by thy penance to grant thee what thou seekest in prayer ! Be convinced that prayer and mortification are sisters, and, as it were, two wings on which the spirit rises to God. Pray and mortify thyself, entreat and do penance, and thy petition will be granted.

Fourth Point.—The last and most important distinction lies in the qualities of the prayer of these two persons. St. Austin remarks that the Pharisee asked for nothing whatever of God, but spent all his time in setting forth his own praises, under pretext of praising God, declaring what evil he avoided and what good works he performed, if, indeed, he spoke the truth ; and, as though he were already perfect, and lacked no sort of perfection, he asked for no grace from the Lord, which is the greatest excess of delusion, and the first step to utter ruin. The publican, on the contrary, humble and contrite, besought from the Lord the pardon of his many sins, and grace to extricate himself from them, esteeming himself unworthy to be numbered amongst His servants, and, because of this humility and contrition, his prayer was heard. Meditate leisurely all this, and see what manner of prayer thine is ; what dost thou ask for ? and with what self-knowledge ? Learn to pray and to plead with submission and humility, and God will hearken to thy prayer.

SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE BENEFIT OF REDEMPTION.

First Point.—Consider the infinite mercy of God, knowing as He does the deceitfulness of man, and how ungrateful he had shown himself for so great a benefit as that of creation. For God had drawn man out of his nothingness, had given him the being he possessed, so exalted in dignity as to be only a little below the angels, and man had made no return but sins instead of service. Yet, notwithstanding this, the clemency of God was so great, that seeing man fallen, without strength to recover himself, disinherited from heaven and condemned to hell, He was moved to pity, and determined to redeem him, and, freeing him from the bonds of sin, to introduce him to the liberty of the sons of God. Oh, infinite goodness ! oh, inexhaustible mercy ! I rejoice, Lord, at Thy immense charity, and would willingly possess all tongues therewith to praise and extol it ; for Thy mercy is even greater than my misery, and Thou hast done more for me than I should know how to solicit. Blessed, praised, and glorified be Thou, O Lord, for endless ages. Amen.

Second Point.—Consider at what price God chose to redeem us. For whereas the least action of His or the slightest movement of His will, being of infinite value, would have sufficed, He chose to redeem us most abundantly by becoming man, and performing so great a number of meritorious actions in His sacred Humanity as no tongue can declare, manifesting thereby His great liberality, born of His infinite love. Ponder, with St. Bernard, the works He performed in the world during the thirty-three years that elapsed from the time of His birth till He died on the Cross, and what merits He accumulated. All this He offered for thee to the Eternal

Father in satisfaction for thy sins, in order to open to thee the gates of heaven and to bestow on thee eternal glory in place of hell, to which thou wert condemned. Contemplate the greatness of His love, His immense liberality, and the compassion He felt for thee ; and see how thou hast corresponded with His goodness until now, and what thou shouldst do in the future for His honour and glory and for the welfare of thy neighbour.

Third Point.—Fix thine eyes on the crucifix, and consider thy Saviour attentively ; behold what He suffered for thee, and how He spent the blood of His veins for the purchase of thy soul. Consider how highly He valued thy soul, having no need of thee, and whereas by thy sins thou didst deserve to be nailed to that Cross with even greater affront and suffering. Christ prevented thee and put Himself in thy place, enduring so much for thee in order that thou shouldst not suffer. Ravished with admiration, give voice to thy gratitude. Contemplate the greatness of His love, of His bounty, of His clemency, and of His infinite liberality and patience. Call upon the heavens and the earth to render Him eternal thanks for so incomparable a benefit. Offer thyself to be His slave and to endure death a thousand times for His love. Ponder what value thou shouldst set on thy soul, which He purchased at the inestimable price of His blood ; and bewail thy ingratitude and thy folly, that thou hast so often sold it at the vile price of some little sensual pleasure, or at some slight interest of worldly honour.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the benefit of redemption endures permanently, for Christ is continually sending thee assistance, arms for thy defence, and grace to journey towards heaven, the forgiveness of thy sins and the medicinal help of the Holy Sacraments for the health of thy soul ; all which He purchased for thee by His merits. Consider what would have been thy fate had He not redeemed thee, and how greatly thou art indebted to Him for this benefit, in which are included so many

favours and mercies that thou receivest daily and hourly from His hand. Inflame thy heart with lively desires of loving Him, serving Him, procuring His honour and glory by all possible means, and seeking to make all men love Him, serve Him, and acknowledge Him ; and do thou thyself endeavour to be as generous in His service as He is in conferring His favours upon thee.

SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE BENEFIT OF PREDESTINATION.

First Point. — Consider how God, infinitely wise, powerful, just, and holy, who has no need of any one, chose out of innumerable souls a certain number whom He predestined to glory through the merits of Christ, and determined to grant them efficacious assistance and grace, by the aid of which He foreknew they would be saved, and merit the glory to which He predestined them ; amongst which souls thou canst reckon thyself. And notwithstanding that God foreknew also their transgressions and the offences they would commit against Him, as He also foreknew thine, such was His bounty that He did not the less on that account predestine thee to heaven, passing by a countless multitude of souls whom He left to burn eternally in hell. Consider the magnitude of this benefit, what thou owest to God for it, and what would have been thy fate had He left thee in oblivion, as He left such numberless other souls whom He did not predestine. Acknowledge all that thou owest for so great a benefit, and see in what manner thou canst manifest thy gratitude.

Second Point. — Consider how many benefits are included in this one, and what assistance and grace God grants thee on account of it ; from how many falls He

saves thee, in what perils He protects thee lest thou succumb. How filled with admiration wouldst thou be couldst thou see now the whole sequence of thy life and the singular providence by which God has guided thee to glory, as thou wilt behold it hereafter in heaven. Humble thyself before His Majesty, and give Him infinite thanks for it, beseeching Him to support thee with His arm, and to assist and favour thee with His grace, in order that thou mayst serve Him as thou shouldst until thou shalt have fulfilled the end of thy predestination.

Third Point.—Consider that exhortation of St. Peter to the faithful, in which he says,¹ “Labour the more, that by good works you may make sure your calling and election ;” and those words of St. Austin : If thou be not one of the elect, labour so as to become one ; for which end God left us our free will, so that we should, by His Divine grace, perform works worthy of immense glory. Look to thyself, lest, through thy negligence, another take thy crown, as St. John says in the Apocalypse.² As St. Paul teaches with regard to beatitude, this grace also is only granted to him who strives valiantly. Contemplate, then, the importance of this affair, and that, in order to merit heaven and assure the desired end of thy predestination, it is absolutely necessary that thou shouldst co-operate with the grace of God, and derive from this meditation a firm resolution to labour with fervour in the vineyard of the Lord, and not to be careless in the things of His service or in what concerns thy spiritual progress.

Fourth Point.—Consider how God, by His Divine providence, decreed that this grace of predestination should be hidden from the eyes of all ; for, as He says in Ecclesiastes,³ “Man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred.” And this He ordained lest the elect should grow careless, judging themselves to be safe in this life, and, as it were, certain of their salvation, and in order that those who lacked this security should not be

¹ 2 St. Peter i.² Apoc. iii.³ Eccl. ix.

cast down, judging themselves to be condemned in the sight of God, but rather that all should serve Him with fervour. For we know that He refuses His grace to no one, and that whenever the sinner is converted and bewails his sins, God will receive him and open to him the gate of glory. God wills that both the just and the sinner should be humble and wary in avoiding sin, and diligent in mourning over their past offences, and in doing penance for them, not thinking themselves to be secure because they know not what their end will be. Meditate this uncertainty of salvation or perdition, in which thou livest, and consider that this is the most important, the all-important, business of thy life, and how terrible a misfortune it were for thee to fail therein and be lost, for thy condemnation would be eternal. Humble thyself in the presence of God, imploring His grace to serve Him aright, to bewail thy sins, to do penance for them, to live in fear of His hidden judgments, and to labour with such fervour and perseverance in this life as to achieve in the next the happy end of thy predestination.

EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost.

ON THE GOSPEL—(MARK VII.)

St. Mark narrates in this Gospel how Christ healed a deaf and dumb man at the petition of those who brought him, and he gives a few of the circumstances of this miracle, which Christ desired should be kept secret, but the people published it loudly, praising the power of the Lord.

First Point.—Consider Christ our Redeemer travelling about everywhere, and, like the sun, illuminating the world with the light of His doctrine, doing good to all,

and denying His compassion and mercy to none. Entreat Him humbly not to leave thee in obscurity, but to banish from thy soul the darkness of vice, to dispel the obscurity and mists of Satan, and to extend to thee the mercy He exhibits towards all. Show Him thy wounds, entreat Him to cure them, and likewise to grant thee His grace to walk in His footsteps, doing good to all.

Second Point.—Consider how, as soon as Christ arrived in that region, this deaf and dumb man was brought to Him to be cured, and He healed him. Ponder the faith and diligence of those who were inspired to bring this man to Christ, whereby they overcame all difficulties and dangers in order to rescue that captive from the devil, and reproach thyself with negligence in seeking the salvation of thy brethren. Behold how many there are in the power of Satan, both deaf and dumb, because they are not brought to Christ, and the Lord is waiting to heal them, but does not, because they come not to Him. Derive hence desires of bringing to Christ all those who are infirm in soul or body, as far as is consistent with thy vocation, in order that He may heal them, and pray and beseech Him with fervent petitions to have pity on all, and to exercise His mercy towards them.

Third Point.—Contemplate, with St. Jerome, in this deaf and dumb man, who, according to St. Matthew, was likewise blind, the ravages that mortal sin works in the soul; for sin obscures the vision of the soul in order that it may not see God, nor perceive its peril, and the deep abyss of hell into which it precipitates itself. Sin renders it deaf to the word of God and to all that is of importance for salvation; and dumb, that it may not praise God or confess its faults and obtain pardon for them, whilst it has eyes, ears, and tongue for all the vices that lead it to destruction. Weep with Christ over the damnation of sinners; implore Him to send preachers and apostolic men to save them, and to grant thee eyes to see Him with, ears wherewith to hearken to Him, and a tongue wherewith to praise and bless Him.

Fourth Point.—Consider the compassion and benevolence with which Christ at once and without hesitation acceded to the prayers of those who besought Him, and, moistening His fingers with His spittle, He opened the eyes and loosened the tongue of the infirm man, who forthwith saw and spoke aright, and all the assistants broke forth into the praises of God, extolling the power of the Saviour. Join thy voice with theirs to bless and praise Him; beseech Him to heal thy soul of all its infirmities, and to give thee grace to grieve over those of thy neighbour, and to heal and succour him in all his necessities.

NINTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THIS MIRACLE.

First Point.—Four principal circumstances accompanied the cure of this sick man, and they are to furnish the four points of this meditation. The first circumstance, according to St. Chrysostom, was that Christ separated him from the crowd, and took him apart alone; wherein He teaches us that, in order to secure the health of our souls, it is needful to withdraw from the crowd, and from exterior concerns which disturb our repose, to converse alone with God, for in retirement thou wilt find what thou lovest elsewhere. Derive hence desires of withdrawing from and abandoning all that which separates thee from God, and of treating with His Divine Majesty in solitude, the business of thy salvation and of the health of thy soul.

Second Point.—Consider the second action of Christ, which was to put His fingers on the man's eyes, and to moisten with His spittle the man's tongue. The fingers of God signify, as the Venerable Bede says, the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Our ears are given us that we may

hearken to God, our voice that we may praise and bless Him, and all these organs are the work of His infinite wisdom, in the power of which, as Christ Himself tells us, He worked miracles and wrought so many marvels. Derive hence high esteem for the works of the Redeemer, and beseech Him to communicate to thee the gifts of His Divine Spirit wherewith to know Him, love Him, serve Him, hearken to Him, and praise Him unceasingly.

Third Point.—The third circumstance which accompanied this miracle was, that Christ raised His eyes to heaven and groaned with deep feeling. He prayed and wept, accompanying His prayer with lamentations, not because it was necessary to do so in order for Him to be heard by the Eternal Father, but in order to furnish us with a model. He thus teaches us to pray with tears and lamentations springing from our innermost souls and from the fire of our hearts, in order that our petitions may ascend to God. Place thy hand on thy breast and see what manner of prayers thine are, how cold and dry and mixed with imperfections, and derive hence desires of amendment and of praying with fervour, attention, and reverence, in order to receive favours from the Lord.

Fourth Point.—Consider the fourth circumstance of this miracle, namely, that the Lord commanded the deaf and dumb man to hear and to speak, and forthwith he heard and spoke. The contact of His fingers was sufficient to open the man's ears, and that of His saliva to loosen his tongue, but Christ made use likewise of His voice in order to teach us the power of His Word, and that the sick are to be healed with the hands and the voice, with works and words. Learn the lesson taught thee by thy Heavenly Master, and make more use of works than words in seeking to cure thy brethren of the infirmities of their souls, offering them most holy examples and moving them by thy conduct to serve God, and to bless and glorify Him, as our Redeemer teaches us. O Heavenly Master! give me Thy grace to practise Thy counsels, to follow in Thy footsteps, and to seek the

welfare of my neighbour more by deeds than by words, until I achieve it as perfectly as Thou didst restore health to this sick man.

TENTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE STATE OF SOUL FIGURED BY THE DEAF AND DUMB
MAN WHOM CHRIST HEALED.

First Point.—Consider that, as Theophilus says, it was the devil who had afflicted this deaf and dumb man whom Christ cured. For it is the work of the devil to render the soul deaf to the voice of God, and to make it dumb that it may not respond to His call. Consider how often He has called thee and thou hast been deaf to His inspirations, and dumb when He spoke to thee, refusing to answer, whilst thou hadst both ears and tongue wherewith to answer the call of the world and the suggestions of the devil. Bewail thine obduracy and stubbornness, and the ingratitude thou hast shown towards so good a God. Ponder how this sick man at the first call of Christ hearkened and answered immediately, and thou dost not respond to the many and such continual calls which He addresses to thee, hardened as thou art in thy sins. Cast thyself at the feet of Christ with heart-felt contrition for the past; solicit His grace to amend, and beg pardon for thine obduracy, firmly purposing to do better for the future.

Second Point.—Contemplate the groans and tears of the Saviour, which were elicited not so much by the infirmities that sick man endured in his body, as by those which sinners suffer in their souls, and especially by thine. Ponder how Christ weeps for thy sins and thou makest merry, who shouldst bewail them with tears of blood; and the cause of this is, that thou art blind

and seest them not, neither dost thou perceive the ruin of thy soul. Open thine eyes, O sinner, and fix them on Christ ; gather up His tears ; behold how He weeps for thee ; then gaze on thyself, and bewail thy sins and the punishment that threatens thee on their account, and beseech God to have pity on thee and to save thee, as He did this sick man, from the oppression of Satan.

Third Point.—Consider how the Evangelist tells us that Christ first looked up to heaven, and then wept at the recollection of the glory that sinners forfeit by their blindness and obstinacy. Oh, that thou didst raise thine eyes to heaven to contemplate the glory that thou lovest by not hearkening to the Saviour and by refusing Him obedience. Contemplate the extent of that glory of heaven, the delight enjoyed by all its inhabitants, and the reward that awaits thee there, and urge thyself to gain it, directing all thine actions towards that end, and obeying the calls and counsels of the Lord.

Fourth Point.—Contemplate what St. Jerome says of this Gospel, namely, that the sinner becomes blind by the contemplation of evil. He grows deaf when he hearkens to what he should refuse to hear, and dumb when he utters words which should not be spoken. Ponder how often thou hast thus been blind, deaf, and dumb, and set a guard upon thy senses, watching over them lest death should enter by these doors and thou lose eternal life. Implore Christ to put His fingers into thy ears and to touch thy tongue and thine eyes with His hands, thus to sanctify them and to give thee grace to moderate and restrain them as thou shouldst.

*ELEVENTH MEDITATION.**For the Wednesday.*

ON THE STEPS TAKEN BY THE SICK MAN IN ORDER TO RECOVER HIS HEALTH AT THE HANDS OF THE SAVIOUR.

First Point.—Consider the steps taken by the deaf and dumb man on his part in order to recover health at the hands of Jesus Christ, in order that, by imitating Him, thou mayst obtain the health of thy soul from the same Divine Hand. His first act was to address himself to Christ, appealing to His mercy for the recovery of his health. Thou shouldst do the like, addressing thyself to God in all thy necessities rather than to men, in order that His infinite pity may move Him to compassionate thee and to give thee health, both of soul and body, as He did to this sick man, having mercy upon him.

Second Point.—The second step was to avail himself of patrons and advocates, who besought Christ in his behalf, and to whom the Saviour yielded, and restored his health. Avail thyself of the intercession of the Saints and friends of God, who have influence with His Divine Majesty; make them thine advocates in all thy wants, entreat them to pray and beseech God for thee, and have firm confidence that by this means thou wilt obtain a favourable answer to thy petitions.

Third Point.—The third step was to obey the voice of God, for as soon as the Saviour said, "Ephpheta," which is, "Be thou opened," he opened his ears and heard without delay; and as soon as Christ touched his tongue it was loosened, and he spoke; and this prompt obedience is a very efficacious means of inclining the merciful pity of God to the prayers of those who implore Him. Ponder how he first heard and then spoke, because it is necessary first to listen and to learn before speaking and teaching. Take thy place in the school of Christ and learn His

doctrine like a faithful disciple, and afterwards thou wilt be able to speak and teach what thou hast learnt.

Fourth Point.—The fourth thing the infirm man did was to speak well and rightly, as the Lord taught him, and to join the bystanders in praising the Lord and extolling His virtue, power, mercy, and sanctity. Such is the occupation of the tongue that God has touched, and which has received health from His Hand. Consider how many times He has touched thine when thou hast received Him in Holy Communion, and blush to see the little effect it has produced in thee, and how little improvement is noticeable in thy conversation. He touched but once the tongue of this man, and he ceased not to praise and magnify God; and having touched thine so often, yet is there not one good word heard to issue from thy mouth. Humble thyself before Jesus; beg pardon for the past; entreat Him to touch thee anew as He did the tongue of this man, and to communicate to thee as He did to him grace to praise and bless Him for ever. Ponder with St. Austin, that although Christ commanded the people not to praise Him, they ceased not to do so, but rather raised their voices the more; for gratitude should not be wanting on the part of the recipient of a favour, even though it be repudiated by the bestower. Let thy tongue praise God unceasingly since He ceases not to bestow favours upon thee.

TWELFTH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE POWER OF CHRIST AND ALL HE BESTOWS ON US
IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

First Point.—Consider what St. John Chrysostom teaches in his explanation of this Gospel, namely, that Christ touched the ears of the infirm man with His

fingers, and the tongue with His spittle, in order to manifest and to publish His Divinity and the power of His hands, giving health by their mere contact. Contemplate the Divinity of Christ united to His most sacred Humanity, to which He gave His infinite power in order to communicate its effects to us all ; for, as the Evangelist tells us, "Virtue went out from Him and healed all." As fire burns whatsoever it touches, so likewise Christ, by the fire of His Divinity with which He burnt, enflamed with His love, and bestowed spiritual and corporal health on all who touched Him. This is He Whom thou receivest in the Sacred Eucharist, the very Author of grace, Christ Himself in the Sacrament. Consider and contemplate how it is that, touching Him so closely, thy soul is not enkindled, and that receiving health itself, thou art yet infirm, as though thou hadst not received it, and entreat the Lord Himself so to prepare thee that thou mayst secure the effects of His power and experience them in thy soul and body alike.

Second Point.—Consider with Theophilus that a man's spittle is that which is superfluous to him, and it was this with which Christ healed the sick man and loosened his tongue, in order to teach us that there is nothing superfluous in the Saviour, but that everything in Him is divine and salutary for man's welfare, and that the smallest portion of His sacred Humanity is of infinite value. Here is declared the true doctrine of the Blessed Eucharist, wherein Christ is contained entire in the whole and wholly in every smallest portion, the least particle thereof bestowing life eternal, even as His saliva gave the health of the body to this sick man. Contemplate this truth, and let thy spirit be rapt in admiration at so sublime a mystery, and at the immensity of the ardent love our Redeemer has shown and still shows us, and which constrained Him to remain with us in the shape of Food for our support in so marvellous and unprecedented manner. O Lord ! how can I ever sufficiently prize so incomparable a benefit ! how can I ever

thank Thee enough for it ! Let all creatures unite to thank Thee, and let the heavens and the earth find voice to praise Thee. And Thou, O Lord, loosen my tongue, as Thou didst that of the dumb man, in order that I may be able and may know how to bless Thee as I ought

Third Point.—Consider how Christ left everywhere signs of Whom He was, and the people cried aloud, saying, “He hath done all things well ; He hath made both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak.” Treat Him, with all the tenderness of thy soul, to leave marks of His power on thee also when He comes to visit thee, communicating His spirit to thee for thy soul, and to thy body the strength necessary for His service. Implore Him to extinguish in thee the fire of lust and the evil inclinations of sensuality, to restrain thine appetites and to subject thy flesh to the spirit, in order that thou mayst never offend Him. Consider further the opinion that Christ left behind Him everywhere, and see what reputation thou dost leave, whether of thee also it can be said that thou hast done all things well, and that thou hast edified all. Consider thy Divine Master, study His life and see how to imitate His example ; draw hence instruction how to live holily, doing good to all, and offering to all an edifying example.

Fourth Point. — Consider the sincerity with which Christ strove to hide this miracle ; on the one hand withdrawing from the crowd to bestow health on the sick man, and on the other solemnly enjoining silence upon all, and endeavouring to bury in oblivion so mighty a work. Ponder that this was not because there could be danger of vanity in Christ, but in order to teach us to hide our good works, and to beware of a vain glory and desire of human applause ; for, as St. Cyprian says, our good actions are spoiled by being seen, and the gaze of men withers them. Learn hence to hide thy good works and to fly from vain glory and conceal in all that concerns them, seeking notoriety with God alone, Who will accept and reward them with eternal rewards. For

if thou dost tell them for the honour and praise that men bestow, thou wilt lose the merit they procure, having, as our Lord warns us, received thy recompense here.

THIRTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE BENEFIT OF GOD'S GOVERNMENT OF THE WORLD.

First Point.—Consider how from the beginning God displayed His infinite wisdom in the arrangement and direction of the world, both with regard to spiritual and to temporal concerns, doing all things with number, weight, and measure, designing and regulating all things with perfect order and harmony, and all this for thy welfare, continuing His direction unceasingly, and never suffering the least disorder or error to supervene. Thus Christ says that His Eternal Father works always, for He is always occupied in preserving and directing the creatures that He made for His service and for the use of man. Thus the harmony of the heavenly bodies and their continual movement, the influence of the stars, the course of the sun and of the moon, the propagation of living creatures, the growth of plants, the formation of minerals, the order of the elements, and that which all creatures preserve amongst themselves, are so many favours and blessings which we receive from His hand, as part of the government and providence exercised by His Divine Majesty. Contemplate His Almighty Hand continually employed in directing for thee the course of the waters, in restraining the sea within its limits, in causing the wind to blow and vivify, in maintaining the solidity of the earth, compelling the fire to preserve its sphere, the heavens their order, the sun and moon their course. Consider what would become of thee if any one of these creatures escaped from its orbit. Give thanks

to God for all this, acknowledging the favours thou receivest each moment from His Hand.

Second Point.—Consider that if the benefit of God's directing providence is so great in the temporal order, it is far greater in the spiritual, which concerns the justification and sanctification of the soul ; wherefore St. Paul says,¹ that Christ is "made unto us wisdom, and justice, and sanctification, and redemption." Consider that He is to us Wisdom, because He is a most sapient Ruler, and thus He knows the inclinations of all, the necessities of each, their perils and dangers, and He forestalls them with solicitude and providence, disposing all things with sweetness and efficacy, in order that we may not fall into the disorder of vice and error of sin, communicating to us likewise wisdom and prudence for the right government of our souls. Consider how much thou dost owe Him with regard to thy soul for the guidance He affords it, and render Him thanks for this benefit, entreating Him at the same time not to let go His hold on thee, but to give thee light and wisdom to enable thee to serve Him with all thy strength.

Third Point.—Consider that besides Wisdom God is also Justice, for He is a most just and upright Ruler, who has not regard to the persons of men, nor is He moved by love or hatred in His actions. For He judges most just judgments, injuring no one, giving to each what is suitable to him according to his merits and capacity, and directing His whole government towards the salvation of souls, whence thou shouldst derive great esteem for His providence and great conformity to His Divine Will in whatever He disposes, embracing it with entire peace of soul and complete submission to His decrees. Be fully persuaded that all things are ordained by the wisdom of God, and are the effects of His love, by which He guides thee towards thy last and supreme end, which is beatitude. Contemplate attentively this

¹ Cor. i.

truth, and establish thyself well therein, and thou wilt acquire great peace of soul.

Fourth Point.—Consider, lastly, how God is also our Sanctification and Redemption, for, as we have already said, His whole government is directed towards our justification. Thus being most holy, God communicates to us sanctity and grace in order that we may love Him and serve Him; and being all-powerful, He protects and delivers us from the tyranny of Satan, and establishes us in the liberty of the children of God. Towards this end does He direct His whole government, and this end likewise must we seek in all our actions. Derive hence instruction, and beseech the Lord, by the love with which He governs us, to grant thee wisdom, justice, sanctification, and grace to act always aright.

FOURTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE BENEFIT OF VOCATION TO THE FAITH OF CHRIST.

First Point.—Consider the magnitude of this benefit, which is the basis and foundation of all other graces of salvation; for, as St. Paul says, without faith it is impossible to please God, to perform works deserving of eternal life, or to acquire a right to heaven. Remember the universal deluge, wherein everybody was drowned, eight persons only excepted, who were rescued in Noah's ark, which was a type of the Church and of the faith of Jesus Christ, wherein is salvation, and outside which men perish in the waters of infidelity. Acknowledge all that thou dost owe to God for this benefit of having brought thee to His Church, and given thee faith and the knowledge of Him for the salvation of thy soul.

Second Point.—Consider the infinite number of souls that God has left in the night of infidelity, many of whom

would have served Him better than thou had He called them to the faith. Yet, knowing thy ingratitude, God of His infinite goodness called thee, and led thee to the knowledge of Him, and set thee on the road to heaven, whilst He permits to fall into the abyss of hell the infinite number of souls that suffer there. Recognise the magnitude of this benefit, and observe that the number of those whom He has left in infidelity is incomparably greater than that of those whom He has brought to the faith, as those who perished in the flood were also more numerous than those who were saved in the ark with Noah. Ponder and meditate how great a favour it is for thee to be one of so few, and not one of the many. See what an infinite number of sins thou wouldst have committed had God created thee in a land of Gentiles, Moors, or heretics, delivered over to thy evil appetites and blinded by their errors. Render Him infinite thanks for the favour He has done thee ; see how and in what manner thou shouldst manifest thy gratitude and how serve Him faithfully.

Third Point.—Consider how, adding mercy to mercy, God has given thee being in the bosom of His Church, and given thee good Catholic parents, who have taught thee His holy faith and educated thee in the ways of morality. He has given thee likewise good masters to instruct thee, preachers to enlighten thee with His holy doctrine, many holy books to guide and instruct thee on the road to heaven, besides which He affords thee many holy inspirations, and, lastly, His grace to strengthen thee in His holy faith. Contemplate all these benefits, which are particular to thyself, since they are lacking to so many, even amongst Christians. Render due thanks to the Lord for such numerous favours, and entreat Him to bestow yet one more upon thee, granting thee His grace to be as grateful for them as thou shouldst.

Fourth Point.—Consider the Sacraments that God has given thee in His Church for the confirmation of thy faith and for remedies to thy soul. Ponder deliberately

the account He will require from thee of all this, and what account thou wouldst now have to render wert thou cited to appear at once before His judgment-seat. Ponder all these benefits one by one, and see how thou hast profited by them, and how very much better God would have been served by any infidel who had received the like gifts from His hand. Grieve over thy ingratitude, and begin to-day to serve Him with fervour, from Whom thou hast received so many favours. Beg His pardon with tears for thy past ingratitude, and firmly purpose to amend for the future.

FIFTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost.

ON THE GOSPEL—(LUKE X.)

St. Luke here recounts how Christ told His disciples that they were blessed whose eyes saw Him Whom so many prophets and kings had desired to see and had not seen ; when behold a doctor of the law sought to tempt Him, asking Him what he should do to reach heaven. To whom Christ answered that he must fulfil the law which commands us to love God, and our neighbour as ourselves ; and in order to explain who is our neighbour, He narrated the parable of a man who fell into the hands of robbers, and being left half dead, none but a Samaritan had pity on him and healed him, showing himself thus his neighbour.

First Point.—Consider the great happiness of the soul that possesses Christ and enjoys the benefits afforded by His Church, His Word, His Sacraments, and by so many wonders as He has performed, and continues to perform, in favour of His faithful. These are the things which so many prophets, patriarchs, kings, wise doctors, and peoples innumerable have desired to see and have not

seen, as we observed in the foregoing meditation. Ponder the greatness of this favour, and what thou wouldst give to secure it if it were not already thine ; show thy gratitude for it to the Lord who granted it to thee, and endeavour to serve and love Him as thou shouldst.

Second Point.—Consider that Christ calls “blessed” the eyes that see Him and the ears that hear Him ; because it suffices not to see Him without hearing Him and obeying His word. Ponder how many were those who saw Him and heard Him during His mortal life, and how few those who followed Him ; and as when a person falls in broad daylight he is guilty of greater carelessness than when the like occurs in the obscurity of night, so, as the Lord Himself said, their having seen and heard Him was to their greater responsibility and condemnation, inasmuch as they believed Him not. Oh, my soul ! thou dost enjoy the light of His doctrine ; thou beholdest His miracles and the examples of His most holy life. Tremble at the account thou wilt have to give to God of all this. See what benefit thou derivest from so bright and clear a light, and beseech God that thou be not of the many who neglect, but of the few who profit by it.

Third Point.—Consider what this lawyer inquired of Christ, namely, what he should do in order to reach heaven. The question was a good one, although his intention was not. Ruminare and meditate it, and consider how many efforts thou makest in order to know what thou shouldst do to secure honours and distinctions, how to obtain better health and to heap up greater riches, and how few are thy endeavours to reach heaven and to secure beatitude. Arouse thy heart ; meditate and consider what thou hast done heretofore in order to achieve eternal bliss, and what thou hast to do for the future. See how important it is to thee to succeed in thy undertaking, and how much thou wilt lose if thou fail therein ; and beseech the Lord with tears to grant thee light, strength, and perseverance, until thou shalt have achieved it.

Fourth Point.—Consider the reply that Christ made to this lawyer, namely, that if he would reach heaven, he must fulfil the law of God, which is summed up in these two precepts: to love God above all things, and our neighbour as our self. Ponder how little is asked of thee for a jewel of such price, and entering into account with thyself, see whether thou hast kept the law or whether thou hast not broken it many times. Cast thine eyes over thy past life, and consider how many offences thou hast committed against God, and how many against thy neighbour, and what title thou hast to claim eternal beatitude. Begin a fresh life, regaining in the future all that thou hast lost in the past, and taking to thyself the words addressed to the lawyer: “Hoc fac et vives,”—“This do and thou shalt live.”

SIXTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE WORDS OF CHRIST IN THIS GOSPEL.

First Point.—Consider how the Saviour says that many prophets and kings desired to see Him and to hear Him, and they neither saw nor heard Him. Ponder, with St. John Chrysostom, that they desired Him because they knew Him by faith, which was always necessary to salvation; but that they obtained not the accomplishment of their wishes, although they besought and implored it of God with tender lamentations and ceaseless pleadings. To thee He has granted this mercy without merit of thine; to thee He has given what He gave not to so many holy prophets, nor to so many powerful kings, because of the love He bears thee, and of the merits and prayers of so many holy persons who prayed and besought it of Him. Acknowledge the obligation under which He has placed thee of serving Him, and derive hence a firm resolution of persevering in thy

good desires, which God will either fulfil for thee, or He will on their account confer graces and favours on those belonging to thee.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ gives the first place to prophets and the second to kings, which is not without mystery, and is intended to teach us that at His judgment-seat prophets are preferred to the kings of the earth, and spiritual persons and religious to seculars, however noble these latter may be. Learn how to value persons and things, always giving the preference in thy estimation to what God most prizes, and ponder that a holy man, however despicable he may appear in the eyes of the world, is of more weight in the sight of God than all the kings and monarchs of the earth.

Third Point.—Consider how this doctor of the law inquired the road to heaven, for the most learned in earthly sciences are frequently the most ignorant of the science of salvation, and because it behoves all to become disciples in order to learn spiritual wisdom and the way of eternal life. Derive hence the desire of acquiring this knowledge, and the resolution of becoming the disciple of those who can teach it to thee, even though they be thy inferiors, overcoming the humiliation of receiving instruction from others, however learned thou mayst be.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ knew the intention with which this inquiry was made, which was not so much for the purpose of learning as in order to tempt Him, and ensnare Him into some word contrary to the law whereof to accuse Him ; whence thou shouldst learn two things : first, that God knows thy intentions and reads thy heart in whatever thou proposest, and that He has more regard to the intention than to the action ; wherefore endeavour to have always a straightforward and righteous intention in all thy words and works if thou wouldst render them pleasing to Him ; secondly, learn great circumspection in thy conduct and in thy dealings with others, particularly if they be not avowedly of the army of Christ, lest thou be deceived and perverted by their

sophisms and assertions. Observe the caution and prudence with which Christ replied to this lawyer, questioning him in return, and convicting him out of his own mouth. Beg of God to grant thee grace not to fall into the snares of thy enemies, and to give thee light and prudence to come forth victorious from the strife.

SEVENTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE MAN WHO FELL AMONG THIEVES.

First Point.—Christ, instructing this lawyer, who alleged ignorance as to who was his neighbour, illustrated His teaching by the following example:—"A certain man," a person without name or position or dignity, an obscure man, "went down from Jerusalem to Jericho." Ponder in these words how Christ teaches us not to regard the persons of men, nor to esteem our neighbour because of his rank, learning, position, or nobility, but to regard every one as our brother, remembering that God is represented in his person. Take no heed of any human consideration, but succour thy neighbour, and assist him in his necessities with all love and charity. Such is the teaching of the Redeemer, and such the lesson thou shouldst derive from this meditation.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ says that the man fell among robbers whilst going down from Jerusalem to Jericho. Jerusalem, as St. Gregory says, signifies "vision of peace," and Jericho, "the moon," which remains not in the same phase, but is continually changing. For souls that persevere not in the vision of God by contemplation, nor in the peace of His friendship, but rather fall away from His spirit, and, as St. Thomas says,¹ after St. Basil, descend from on high to lower

¹ S. Thom. in Caten.

things, and from the summit of perfection into tepidity, fall thus into the hands of the devils, who are the robbers that kill and pillage us in this our pilgrimage and journey to heaven. Oh, my soul ! see in what manner thou dost live and how thou journeyest, and descend not from the heights of virtue into the abyss of vice ; from mortification to self-seeking ; nor from the mountain of prayer to the valley of negligence and sensual entertainments, lest thou fall into the hands of robbers, who shall despoil thee of the treasure of thy good works, and leave thee poor, wounded, and without strength to travel onwards to heaven.

Third Point.—Meditate how this man, in whom, as St. Austin himself says, the sinner is typified, was despoiled, wounded, and left without strength to pursue his journey. For he that falls into the hands of robbers, that is, of the devils, is despoiled of the grace of God, of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and of good habits, and left without strength to prosecute his journey towards heaven. Oh, my soul ! contemplate the ravages wrought by one mortal sin, and resolve to die thousands of times rather than commit a single one. Behold thou journeyest along the desert of this world to the promised land of heaven. Travel not unarmed, for the road is beset by robbers, who await thee at each step to wound and despoil thee. See how thou travellest ; seek the guidance of good masters and fathers of the spiritual life, and God will defend and assist thee, and lead thee victoriously and unhurt from amidst the snares of thine enemies.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ says that this man was left half dead, not altogether, as St. Austin remarks, because the sinner still retains the faith, and knowledge, and possibility of recovering, by the help of Divine grace, both life and health. If thou hast fallen into sin and into the power of thine enemies, despair not of recovering the favour of thy God, but rather take courage and arouse thyself, and thou wilt not fail to find a faithful Samaritan, who will assist thee and lend thee a

hand to arise, to withdraw from sin and return to His friendship. Cry aloud, weep, lament, and do penance, and God will be on thy side ; He will succour thee, will bind up all thy wounds, and strengthen thee with His grace, until He safely places thee in His glory.

EIGHTEENTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON CHARITY TOWARDS OUR NEIGHBOUR.

First Point.—Consider the test of brotherly love propounded by Christ, and how the man who fell among robbers, being left wounded, despoiled, poor, and needy, was abandoned to his misery by the priest and Levite, who, although they beheld him, passed on without heeding him, and were on that account condemned as inhuman by our Lord. Reflect on thyself ; see how many persons thou knowest to be poor and needy, and yet whom thou dost not compassionate, and how many poor and wounded persons are within thy reach and thou turnest thine eyes away from them and passest on as these men did, without approaching them or lending them assistance. Bewail thy hardness of heart, tremble lest God condemn thee as inhuman, as He did these men in the Gospel, and derive hence a firm resolution of succouring the poor and needy according to thy means.

Second Point.—Consider how, on drawing near, the Samaritan, from whom less was to be expected, took compassion on the wounded man and sought to heal him. Blush in the presence of God to perceive how secular persons, and not unfrequently sinners, are more compassionate towards the poor than thou, and assist the sick poor with a charity in which thou art wanting ; and beg grace from the Lord to surpass all in this virtue and likewise in all others.

Third Point.—Consider what remedies the Samaritan applied, which Christ tells us were wine and oil, and bandages wherewith to bind his wounds. The wine was required in order to cleanse the wounds and to strengthen the poor man; the oil, to heal his wounds gently and without pain; the bandages, to hide them and protect them from the inclemencies of the weather. Oh, my soul! that thou didst know how to heal the spiritual wounds of thy neighbour with the strong wine of reproof when needful, and with the sweet oil of meekness and pity, binding them with the bandages of recollection. Implore of God this prudence in order that thou mayst gain thy neighbour and heal the spiritual wounds of souls, as this Samaritan did the bodily injuries of the man who fell among thieves.

Fourth Point.—Consider, lastly, how the Samaritan did not stop here, but having dressed his wounds, he placed the sick man on his beast, himself travelling on foot the rest of the way, and conveyed him to the inn, where he charged the servants to care for him. Neither did he then desist from his solicitude, but the following day he took out twopence wherewith to pay for the care bestowed on the sick man. In all this Christ seeks to teach us not to weary of doing good to our neighbour, but to persevere therein, regarding him with the same tender love we bear towards ourselves, and dressing his wounds, corporal as well as spiritual, until we achieve his cure, sparing neither expense, nor care, nor toil for this end, and, if needful, inconveniencing ourselves for the advantage of our neighbour, as did also this Samaritan. Raise thyself above earthly considerations and behold Christ in thy neighbour; see Him sick and wounded for thy sake, poor and abandoned; and with tender affection approach to dress His wounds; neglect Him not nor lose sight of Him, and thou wilt find consolation and devotion, and wilt double thy merits by serving God in the person of thy neighbour.

*NINETEENTH MEDITATION.**For the Thursday.*

ON THE LOVE THAT GOD REQUIRES FROM US.

First Point. — Consider what Christ says in this Gospel, namely, that in order to go to heaven it is necessary to fulfil the law that commands us to love God with our whole heart, with our whole soul, with all our strength, and all our mind. Four things are required of thee, wherein thou hast four points for meditation. Ponder first, that, as St. John says, God asks us to love Him because He first loved us, and love alone can repay love. God asks not of thee thy wealth, nor thy pleasures, nor any of all the things that thou valuest, but only thy heart :¹ “My son, give Me thy heart.” Hearken to this call which issues from the mouth of God and is addressed to thee, and see what should be thy response. Ponder what thou art and Who God is, how occupied God is with thee, and how little occupied thou art with Him or for Him. Seeing that God sets His heart on thee, it is little enough that thou shouldst be filled with Him and shouldst love Him Who so loves thee. Say to Him then with tenderest affection : Lord, I here offer Thee my heart with utmost gratitude that Thou shouldst deign to accept it. Behold me at Thy feet ; be it done unto me according to Thy word. May my heart be inflamed with the fire of Thy love, for it is all Thine, and may I no longer love ought but Thee alone.

Second Point. — Consider, secondly, that the Saviour tells us to love God with our whole soul, which is immortal and imperishable, and thereby He requires that our love for God be everlasting and perpetual, that it never fail, and that we never cease to love Him, even as God ceases not to love us, and is ever conferring upon

¹ Prov. xxiii.

us favours which are the effects of that love. Thus, O my soul! shouldst thou be wholly occupied with God, never distracted from Him by any creature, nor ever ceasing to love Him. Implore Him to grant thee this grace that thou mayst be always employed in loving Him and in serving Him, as He is ever occupied in doing good to thee.

Third Point.—Consider that Christ says we must love God with all our strength, using it all in His service and not in that of the world nor in the concerns of our self-love. Enter into thyself, O sinner! and see whether thou hast fulfilled this precept of the law, whether thou hast employed thy strength in the pursuit of creatures or in the service of thy Creator. Bewail thy past errors, and most firmly resolve, in the presence of God, to use henceforth all thy strength, powers, and senses in loving and serving Him; review them one by one, offering them all to Him with great fervour.

Fourth Point.—Fourthly, Christ says that we are to love God with all our mind, employing not only our heart in loving Him and our strength in serving Him, but likewise our understanding in the contemplation of Him, and our memory in keeping Him present to us, never forgetting Him. All our thoughts are to be occupied with God, even as God occupies His with our welfare, having us constantly present to His mind and never forgetting us. Aspire to this perfection, and study to imitate therein many of the Saints, whose thoughts were continually occupied with God, contemplating His perfections and offering all their actions to Him, keeping Him always before them, and acting as in His presence, with the straightforward intention of pleasing and serving Him in all their works. Entreat this grace of the Lord, and beseech Him to inflame thee with the fire of His love, in order that thou mayst love Him eternally as thou shouldst.

TWENTIETH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON CHRIST OUR LORD, THE CHARITABLE SAMARITAN WHO
HEALED OUR SOULS.

First Point.—Consider that, as St. Austin and other Saints affirm, this compassionate Samaritan, who took pity on the wounded man, dressed his wounds, and carried Him to the inn with so much tenderness, was a figure of Christ Himself. For the word Samaritan signifies guardian, and Christ was the Guardian of our souls. The Samaritan was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and Christ came down from the heavenly Jerusalem to this valley of tears, where He found man, who is but a pilgrim and traveller in this world, poor, wounded, despoiled, and covered with the wounds of faults and sins. Thus did He find thee and all the sons of Adam, who, through the guilt of our first parent, have fallen into the hands of Satan; and moved to pity and compassion for our ills, He approached us, taking on Himself our nature, and at His own expense He chose to heal our wounds; and what is more, He took them on Himself in order that we might endure them no longer. Oh, good Jesus! oh, most pitiful Lord, Father, Health and Life of souls! Great was Thy mercy, since, having no need of us, Thou wouldst at so great a cost to Thyself heal man, who had so grievously offended Thee. Contemplate thyself as one wounded and poor, cast on the desert of this world without strength to journey on to heaven, and behold the Lord of life comes to heal thee and to be thy remedy. See what thanks thou shouldst render Him for so incomparable a benefit as this, which He came from heaven to bestow; see what an obligation of serving Him He has laid thee under, and offer thyself to be eternally His servant and slave.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ dressed thy wounds with the balsam of His blood, opening, as St. Bernard says, His veins, and giving His blood most abundantly for the cure of the wounds and ulcers of thy sins. Christ took compassion upon thee; do thou also compassionate Him. Christ shed His blood for thee; hesitate not to shed thine for His love. Gaze on thy Redeemer wounded for thy sake; enter by meditation into that breast on fire with love for thee; behold how willingly He offers His most precious blood in order to heal thy wounds, and break forth with admiration and deep feeling into acts of love and compassion, saying to Him: O Lord! were it not better for me to die rather than to behold Thee wounded and shedding Thy blood for me? Grievous indeed have been the wounds made by my sins since they needed so costly a remedy. It grieves me, Lord, to have occasioned Thy sufferings: let the angels extol Thy clemency, for I know not how to do so worthily; let all creatures magnify Thee. I now offer Thee all the praises and honour that they render or can render Thee throughout eternity.

Third Point.—Consider how the Samaritan dressed the wounds of the injured man with oil and wine, and bound them with a bandage; and Christ healed ours by preparing with His own flesh and blood the salutary remedy of the most Holy Sacrament—under the species of bread and wine, and applied this remedy to our wounds, as St. Austin affirms, by means of the bandage and restraint of His precepts. Contemplate the efficacy of this remedy and the love wherewith Christ conceived it; see how often He has applied this remedy to thy wounds, and yet thou hast never been completely cured of them, and beseech God to grant thee grace to receive it as thou shouldst.

Fourth Point.—Consider, lastly, how Christ has brought thee to His Church, where, as St. Chrysostom remarks, the infirmities of the soul are healed, and outside which there are neither medicines nor power for the healing of

the wounds of sin. Ponder the care He has had and still has of thee ; how He has intrusted thee to so many and such zealous priests, who dress thy wounds and care for thy spiritual health ; how He has given thee the Holy Sacraments, and all this at His own cost, seeking to heal thee and to restore thy strength for the journey to heaven. And thou dost refuse to be healed, and by thine own fault ; and because thou wilt not profit as thou shouldst by these remedies, thou art yet uncured. Cry aloud to the Physician of thy soul : implore Him to take pity on thee, to heal thee, and to lend thee His aid wherewith to start afresh on the way of His holy service, and to persevere therein until, in His company, thou reach heaven.

TWENTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE BENEFIT OF JUSTIFICATION.

First Point.—Consider the greatness of this benefit, and in order to discover its value, set before thine eyes two souls—the one in grace before God, the other in sin and in His disgrace. Contemplate the former more beautiful and favoured than the sun, the moon, and all the stars of heaven, and more resplendent than light itself, enriched with all imaginable gifts and graces, understanding, will, memory, wisdom, science, prudence, fortitude, and all the other virtues, without the slightest shadow of sin or blemish of imperfection, beloved of God and heir of His glory. And then, on the contrary, contemplate the soul in the state of mortal sin, more hideous and frightful than the very demons, black, obscure, vile, wounded, and covered with leprosy from head to foot ; possessed by the devil, despoiled of all virtue and grace, filled with innumerable vices, disinherited from heaven, and condemned for ever to hell. Now the benefit that

God conferred on thee when He justified thee was to withdraw thee from the state of sin and establish thee in the state of grace. Behold the distance that separates the one from the other, and what thou wouldst give didst thou find thyself in the state of sin in order to acquire the state of grace, for there is nothing in this world which can at all equal it in value. Acknowledge this immense mercy, and consider in the presence of God how great is the obligation under which He has laid thee, and what return thou canst make.

Second Point.—Consider how all men are in the hands of God as clay in the hands of the potter, to make thereof vessels of honour or vessels of ignominy according to His will. And passing by an infinite number of souls, whom He left in sin, He determined of His mere bounty to withdraw thee therefrom, to establish thee in the state of grace, and to make thee heir of His glory. Behold the immense number of souls that God has left in the blindness of idolatry, those who have fallen into heresy and who will not repent, and those Christians whom God has abandoned, and who rush recklessly after vice, heaping sin upon sin, and who, were God to grant them the graces He bestows on thee, would escape from that condition; and this grace which He refuses to them He affords thee, calling thee, and raising thee out of the mire of thy vices to the state of grace. Recognise thy weakness, and how much thou owest to God; humble thyself in His presence, giving Him thanks, and imploring Him to hold thee by the hand lest thou fall from the happy state of grace into the luckless and miserable state of guilt, and lose such wealth by a single sin.

Third Point.—Consider how many times God has multiplied this favour towards thee; for not only did He cleanse thee from the guilt thou didst contract in Adam, introducing thee to the state of grace, but after having received this favour thou didst treacherously fall into fresh sins; and whilst meriting thereby that He should abandon thee, He on the contrary stretched out the arm

of His mercy in order to raise thee out of them, and time after time He has withdrawn thee from the state of sin and made thee heir to heaven. Ponder how many benefits are contained in this one, how many inspirations and aids God has afforded thee, from how many perils He has delivered thee, how much ingratitude He has borne with from thee, how many sins He has pardoned thee, and into what an abyss of ills thou wouldst have fallen had He forsaken thee. Blush in His presence, and acknowledge that thou art incapable of showing due gratitude for such favours, or of serving worthily so great a Lord. Entreat Him to pardon thee, and to accept, in compensation, the blood and merits of Jesus Christ, Who gave them as the price of thy ransom, and to supply for thy shortcomings. Implore likewise the most Holy Virgin and all the Saints to praise God a thousand times for thee, to supply for thine incapacity, and to obtain from the Lord grace henceforth never to forfeit that most happy state of friendship with Him.

Fourth Point.—Consider that, in addition to all this that we have said, God has called thee to greater perfection, inspiring thee to endeavour to serve Him in higher and more perfect things, whereby thou mayest obtain an increase both of grace in this life and of glory in the next. Ponder the benignity with which God receives sinners when they are converted, the clemency with which He pardons them, the pity with which He compassionates them, forgetting their sins, and bestowing favours upon them as though they had never offended Him. Recall the favours He has conferred on thee, when, had He dealt with thee in strict justice, He would have cast thee down into hell. Praise and extol His infinite bounty and that immense ocean of His clemency, and humbling thyself before His throne, acknowledge thy unworthiness, and that thy debt to Him is infinite. Think over and over again how thou canst repay Him; purpose most firmly not to offend Him for the sake of any earthly thing, to co-operate with His grace, and to employ thyself wholly in His service, in order to testify thy gratitude.

*TWENTY-SECOND MEDITATION.**For the Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost.*

ON THE GOSPEL—(LUKE XVII.)

In this Gospel St. Luke narrates the miracle performed by Christ our Lord in restoring ten lepers to health, of whom one only, and he a stranger, returned to give thanks for the benefit received.

First Point.—Consider how Christ went about the world, not only enlightening all with the light of His doctrine, but also healing the sick and doing good to all, both in soul and body. Rejoice to have such a Redeemer and Master, Who at all times and in all places is ceaselessly employed in doing good to men. Place thyself beneath the rays of this Divine Sun of Justice, and beseech Him to irradiate thee therewith, giving light to thy soul, and to thy body the strength necessary for His service.

Second Point.—Consider how these lepers, beholding their wounds, sought the Heavenly Physician, and made every effort in order to obtain of Him their cure. Blush to perceive that men are more earnest in seeking the health of their bodies than thou art in seeking that of thy soul. Turn thine eyes on thyself; recognise the leprosy that afflicts thee, and the need thou hast of a physician to heal thee; and seek the Lord with all diligence, for He is the true Physician, from whom we receive both spiritual and corporal health. Entreat Him to heal thy infirmities, and to give thee grace never to fall back into them again.

Third Point.—Consider the benignity with which Christ received these ten lepers, and ponder the answer that He gave them, whereby they recovered their health, although it did not appear calculated to confer it. Derive hence a firm purpose of receiving the poor with kindness,

and of tending the sick and lepers for the love of Christ, and in imitation of His example. Consider how many there are in thine own town who suffer because they have none to assist them, and dedicate thyself to their service, endeavouring to heal those afflicted with leprosy of the body, and likewise those who suffer from the worse leprosy of the soul.

Fourth Point.—Consider that of the ten who were healed, one only returned to give thanks to Christ, whilst the nine at once forgot the benefit received. Bewail the ingratitude of men, who whilst receiving favours forget them; for the number of the thankless is incomparably greater than that of the grateful. Bewail their perdition, and extol the mercy of God, Who never ceases to do good to all, Who makes His sun to rise on the ungrateful as well as on the grateful, His rain to fall equally on the wicked as on the good, and sustains alike the unjust and the just. Resolve forthwith not to be of the unjust or the thankless; and implore God's grace to be one of the few, and to imitate the one leper who went back, with a loud voice giving thanks to Christ for the benefit he had received.

TWENTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE EFFORTS MADE BY THE TEN LEPERS TO
RECOVER HEALTH.

First Point.—Consider that the first means used by the lepers was prayer—crying out with a loud voice to Christ, beseeching and imploring Him to grant them health; wherein thou shouldst recognise the efficacy of prayer, and that God has determined to confer upon man by this means the favours He wishes to bestow. Lay thy heart on thy breast, and consider how many graces

thou hast lost by not asking for them, and how many God has withheld because thou didst not pray. Ask and implore the Lord with clamorous lamentations to turn His eyes towards thee, and to have mercy upon thee. Note what Theophilus says, namely, that these lepers were afar off from the Saviour in the body, but that their souls approached Him by prayer, and they obtained health equally with those who touched Him. Thou hast turned away from God by thy sins; approach Him by prayer, and thou wilt obtain the health of thy soul.

Second Point.—The second means they used was to remain at a distance, and not to approach the Saviour, as St. Luke notes when he says, “*steterunt a longe*,”—“who stood afar off,” both because of the respect they bore the Saviour, and in order to fulfil the law, which commanded them not to associate with their fellows. Learn hence the respect thou shouldst bear towards Christ and those who hold His place, and also to accompany thy supplications with observance of the law, if thou wouldst obtain what thou seekest from God; for without this fidelity thy petitions will not be agreeable to Him, but with it thou wilt obtain their accomplishment.

Third Point.—Consider the third means employed, which was to show their wounds, and discover their leprosy to Christ and to the priests, as the law enjoined; wherein they teach us to manifest our consciences, and discover the leprosy of our sins to the priests, in order to obtain the spiritual health of the soul. Ponder the grace conferred by God on the priesthood for the cure of souls; render thanks to Him for it, and acquire an increased appreciation of the Sacrament of Penance, and a firm resolution of exposing all thy sins in confession, in order to obtain perfect health, and to purify thy conscience from the spiritual leprosy which has, perchance, long afflicted it, because thou hast not manifested it to thy confessor.

Fourth Point.—Consider the last means they employed,

namely, prompt obedience ; starting at once, without reply or resistance, to obey the Saviour ; and whilst yet on the road, before they had reached the priests, they obtained health : thereby proving that this miracle was the effect of obedience, and was wrought by God on that account. O Lord ! great indeed is this virtue, and most agreeable to Thee. Grant me grace to embrace it, and to obey in all things both Thee, and all the prelates and superiors, confessors and masters, who hold Thy place, that I may merit thereby to obtain the health of my soul and eternal glory. Amen.

TWENTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE LEPROSY OF SIN AND ITS CURE.

First Point.—Consider how, as St. Austin remarks, Christ has made no law against the leprosy of the body, but against that of the soul. The old law forbade lepers to enter into the towns, in order that they might not contaminate others ; but the law of the gospel of Christ makes no prohibition against this leprosy, but only against that of the soul, counselling the healthy not to associate with sinners afflicted with the leprosy of vice and evil customs, in order that its infection may not cling to them. Meditate, then, the evils that this contagious leprosy of sin inflicts upon the sinner ; for, first, as St. Thomas says, it separates us from God and His Saints : in figure of which the ten lepers stood afar off from Christ, and sinners are yet farther off from God, even though they approach His altar, for sin separates them from God farther than the east is from the west. Abraham, speaking to the rich man, though so near as to be within hearing, said that there was an insuperable distance between, not so much materially as spiritually ;

for Abraham was in the state of grace and the rich man was in sin. Consider the ravages wrought by this spiritual contagion in the soul, and endeavour by all possible means to prevent its infecting thine. Ponder how grievous an evil it is to be far off from God ; how much injury thou hast done thy soul by separating thyself from Him, and how many benefits he experiences who draws near to our Lord ; and entreat Him with tears not to leave thee, for if the sun be withdrawn, thou wilt remain frozen and in darkness, and in danger of falling at every step.

Second Point.—Consider that leprosy is a contagious malady, and that every one flies from a leper lest he catch the disease : thus do the good fly from the leprosy of sin and from the sinner infected therewith, in order not to catch his disease. Wherefore, as St. Austin says, Catholics are not to communicate with heretics, lest they become infected with the contagion of their heresy. Draw hence a resolution of associating with the virtuous, whose conversation may profit thee, and of flying from the wicked, who might contaminate thee with the contagion of their errors and vices.

Third Point.—Consider that, as St. Austin says, leprosy is an evil, the nature of which is to discolour the body, to consume the flesh, to reduce the strength, and by little and little destroy life and occasion death. In like manner do evil customs and sin stain the soul, cause it to appear like a leper in the sight of God, destroy its virtue, waste its strength, and inflict eternal death on all who suffer it ; at least such is the action of that greatest of evils, mortal sin. Beseech the Lord to free thee from it ; and if, in order to be healed of corporal leprosy, men leave no stone unturned, how much greater diligence should they not make use of in order to obtain the cure of the spiritual leprosy of their souls ? The former causes temporal death, the latter eternal and everlasting death, which will never end. Implore of God to grant thee grace to seek the health of thy soul at any cost.

Fourth Point.—Consider how costly and how difficult must be the cure of corporal leprosy, since these men after so long a time had been unable to obtain it, and how easily that of the soul is secured. It is ever accessible, without cost or labour, for these ten lepers obtained it by a single word. Weep over the many persons there are in the world who remain lepers because they neglect to seek for health, having the Physician and so easy a remedy close at hand. Bewail also thine own negligence in seeking it; implore of God fervour and a right spirit to seek diligently henceforth thy health and that of thy neighbour. Remember Naaman the Syrian, who came from Syria to Palestine with letters from his king in search of Eliseus that he might cure him of his leprosy, and thou art too idle to approach the priest and to wash thyself in the Jordan of penance, which thou hast at hand, in order to be healed of thine. Ponder with Theophilus, quoted by St. Thomas, that these ten lepers addressed Christ, in Whom salvation abides, and implored it of Him, calling Him Jesus; for this most sweet name is as oil poured out, which heals all infirmities. Address thyself to this Supreme Physician; cry aloud and implore health of Him; show Him thy wounds, and say to Him, with tender affection of heart: Jesus, Master of the world, have pity upon me. Persevere in soliciting, and He will heal thee both in body and in soul, as He healed the lepers who invoked Him.

TWENTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE VIRTUE OF GRATITUDE.

First Point.—Consider that, although ten lepers recovered health, only one returned to thank the Lord for it, wherein he taught us the virtue of gratitude. Ponder

what St. Luke says, namely, that "One of them, when he saw that he was made clean, went back, with a loud voice glorifying God." This man alone had eyes to see the benefit he had received ; this man alone observed and considered it, wherefore he alone was moved to gratitude by it. This is the first quality of gratitude, to know and acknowledge a benefit, and not to be forgetful of it. Oh, my soul ! that thou didst perceive and recognise the favours that God has conferred on thee ; how grateful wouldst not thou then be for them ! But because thou observest them not, thou dost neither reflect on them nor requite them as thou shouldst. Derive hence a firm determination to meditate frequently on the benefits of God, and to contemplate the favours that He has bestowed, and continually bestows upon thee, in order to be grateful for them, and to serve His Divine Majesty as thou shouldst.

Second Point.—Consider how St. Luke says that this man returned with a loud voice glorifying God and extolling His power ; for if any virtue can glorify and do honour to God, it surely is that of gratitude ; and thus Christ said that there was none other found to return and give glory to God but this one man. Recognise the greatness of this virtue, and how highly God prizes it, and henceforth be not sparing of thy gratitude towards God, acknowledging and confessing, in the sight of the whole world, the mercies thou receivest from His hand, and that whatever good there is in thee, be it much or little, all comes from the hand of the Lord.

Third Point.—Consider what the Evangelist records and Christ Himself observed, namely, that out of ten this one man alone, who was a stranger and not of the people of Israel, came to give thanks to God, whilst those on whom the obligation was greater were forgetful of this duty. Wherein his merit shone forth the more ; for, as St. Gregory says,¹ if it be more grievous to be wicked amongst the good, so, on the other hand, is it

¹ Gregor. in 1 cap. 106.

more praiseworthy to be virtuous amongst the wicked, and it was all the more meritorious and praiseworthy of this man to be grateful, because of his association with the nine who were not so, although the obligation of gratitude was the more incumbent on them as Israelites. Derive from this meditation a most firm resolution of fulfilling thy duty even though all thy companions and household neglect theirs. Take heed of what is thy duty, and not of that which regards others; for if they are negligent, thy merit and reward will only be the greater, as was the case with this Samaritan, who alone showed gratitude towards the Lord.

Fourth Point.—Consider the words Christ addressed to this stranger when He saw him prostrate at His feet, giving thanks for the health he had recovered: “Arise, go thy way, for thy faith hath made thee whole.” Oh, great virtue, that of gratitude, which merited such a blessing from the mouth of the Saviour! Ponder separately each word, as the Venerable Bede does. “Arise,” for he that is grateful to God rises from the state of sin to the state of grace, confessing his weakness, and that all that is good in him comes from the hand of God. “Go thy way” on the road of perfection, wherein the grateful increase in progress. “Thy faith hath made thee whole,” that is, it has obtained for thee health of body and of soul, for this is what the grateful receive, together with continual aid and grace not to return to sin. Oh, my soul! cast thyself with this stranger at the feet of thy Redeemer; render thanks in his company for the benefits the Saviour has conferred on thee, adore Him with body and soul. Spare not thy voice; raise it with this grateful man to bless and praise the Lord. Publish to all His virtue and sanctity, His Divinity and Omnipotence, together with His immense Mercy and Compassion. Entreat Him to forgive the ingratitude thou hast until now manifested, and to assist thee with His grace as He did this Samaritan, in order not to return to the contagious leprosy of sin, but to persevere eternally in His service.

*TWENTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.**For the Thursday.*

ON THE VICE OF INGRATITUDE AND ITS CHASTISEMENT.

First Point.—Consider how these nine lepers who were ungrateful for the health that they received from the hand of the Lord were Israelites, descendants of Abraham and of the chosen people of God, born in the light of His faith and holy precepts ; whilst the grateful leper was a Samaritan, and, as it were, a stranger to that people ; and not one of the Israelites was moved to join him in a thing so just as giving thanks for the mercy received from the Lord. Ponder how those who are most bound to be grateful are often the most thankless, and bewail the forgetfulness of the children of Adam with regard to God's mercies and benefits. Ponder the magnitude of this vice, which grows and increases in proportion to the favours bestowed ; and that as on the part of God these favours never cease, so neither do men cease continually to offend Him, thus each day does their malice increase and develop. Place thy hand on thy breast and see whether thou be one of the multitude of those who are ungrateful to God, and entreat Him with tears to sustain thee with His arm, not to permit thee to fall into so grievous a sin, and to grant thee grace to be eternally grateful to Him.

Second Point.—Consider how, as we may piously believe, the grateful Samaritan invited the rest to come and return thanks to Christ for the benefit received, and even though he did not do so in words, his example must have preached to them, urging them to be grateful ; but such was their obduracy and ingratitude, that not one followed him. Ponder, in this circumstance, the hardness of heart of the ungrateful, who, like poisonous serpents, convert the good food that is given them into venom, and, like

the blind, behold not the mercies that they receive. See how all creatures invite them to gratitude towards God by their example, for they all unceasingly praise and bless Him for the benefits He bestows on them. Bewail their obstinacy, and beg of God to give them light and grace to serve Him, and to thee that of not imitating them, but of walking in the footsteps of those who are grateful for His favours and benefits.

Third Point.—Consider how the nine ungrateful lepers were of better birth than the Samaritan, but of less virtuous habits, and that not being themselves good, it availed them little to be descended from virtuous progenitors; whilst the Samaritan was not hindered, by being of lower and less noble parentage, from being grateful, and being therefore preferred to the nine before the tribunal of Christ, Who values each one according to his own merits, and not according to those of his forefathers. Reflect that grace consists not in descending from just parents, but in resembling them in justice; many persons of low extraction are preferred to the most exalted on account of their virtue and of their gratitude. Oh, how different are the judgments of God from those of men! Oh, how deceitful are the appreciations of the world, and how just are those of God! Take account of these last, and be not ruled or guided by the former. Consider how soon this drama will be ended, and then all will alike receive their reward according to their merits; wherefore derive hence, as a last consequence, to be grateful to God, to serve Him sincerely, and to await thy recompense from His hand.

Fourth Point.—Contemplate Christ at the entrance of the town, in the company of His disciples, with the Samaritan prostrate at His feet. Fix thine eyes on the countenance of the Redeemer; observe the sentiments therein manifested; hearken to those feeling words that come from His mouth: "Were not ten made clean? and where are the nine?" He was not ignorant, where they were, as Cardinal Hugo observes, but He asked for them

as if He knew not ; for He will not acknowledge the ungrateful as His, and He makes them strangers to His grace, and consequently to His kingdom. God created Adam, and enriched him with infinite graces, and he was so ungrateful that, instead of giving thanks for them, he made use of them to offend God ; and at once God's voice was heard asking for Adam, as if He ignored where he was,¹ saying, "Where art thou ?" Ingratitude had estranged him from God and removed him from His friendship, and the Lord deprived him of His grace and of the inheritance of heaven, banished him from Paradise, and condemned him to countless miseries. Oh, my soul ! behold thyself in that mirror ; perceive the magnitude of this vice in the greatness of its chastisement, and fall not into it, lest God say to thee as to the imprudent virgins, "I know ye not," and He close the door in thy face, depriving thee of His grace, and of the paradise of His glory. Cry aloud to thy Redeemer, and beseech Him to take pity upon thee, as He did upon the lepers ; to heal thee of the leprosy of thy sins, and to admit thee into the fold of His elect, to serve Him eternally.

TWENTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON COMPASSION TOWARDS CHRIST, WOUNDED FOR US AS
A LEPER.

To-day being dedicated to Christ's Passion, let us meditate on the leprosy that the Redeemer of the world endured for us, according to those words of Isaias,² "We have thought Him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins ; the chastise-

¹ Gen. iii.

² Isa. liii.

ment of our peace was upon Him, and by His bruises we are healed."

First Point.—Set before thine eyes Christ our Redeemer, as Isaias paints Him, wounded with leprosy from head to foot, despised and rejected by all, humbled by insults, assailed by suffering on every side, both interiorly and exteriorly, alone, persecuted, forgotten, and set aside as lepers were under the old law. Contemplate Him thus silently soliciting thy compassion; behold, He has as many tongues as there are wounds on His body, as many voices as sufferings that He endures, which all cry to thee, saying,¹ "*Misereмини mei, saltem vos amici mei,*"—"Have pity on me, at least ye my friends." See whether thou dost compassionate Christ, and what response thou hast made to this appeal. Ponder leisurely what He suffers; consider His loneliness, and as He compassionated the lepers, so do thou compassionate Him. Keep Him company in His solitude when all abandon Him, and offer thyself at His feet to serve Him, and to bear Him company eternally.

Second Point.—Consider how, as Isaias says, that He was "struck by God" for our sins, and thus he says that he beheld Him "as it were a leper." Not a leper, for the leprosy of guilt touched Him not; but he took on Himself the penalty thereof, and carried the wounds and sorrows that we had merited and should have borne. Oh, my Redeemer! with what words can I thank Thee for so signal a mercy? Thou didst take upon Thyself the infirmity that I should have endured and the leprosy that was mine; Thou didst bear the pain that I should have suffered: I sinned, and Thou didst penance for my sins: be Thou blessed, praised, and glorified for endless ages. Amen.

Third Point.—Meditate those words, "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him," for by His chastisement and penance the Eternal Father was appeased, and His anger against us being removed, He admitted us to

¹ Job.

His peace and friendship. Contemplate and behold how great was the cost of thy reconciliation with God, and with what joy the sweet Jesus suffered so great an accumulation of woes, in order to win for thee peace and the friendship of God. Perceive the value of this pearl by the price that the Redeemer paid for it, and, after thanking Him for so great a mercy, set thyself to think what thou shouldst not give to preserve it. Consider its value, and at how low a price thou hast oftentimes sold it, bartering it away for a momentary and vile pleasure, for an angry word, a revengeful thought, or some human interest—all valueless things. Oh, my Lord ! how blind have I been heretofore ! It grieves me to have offended Thee, and to have so undervalued that precious jewel of Divine friendship which Thou didst purchase for me at the price of Thy Blood. I purpose to amend and to die a thousand deaths rather than to forfeit it anew, or give Thee occasion of suffering for me again.

Fourth Point.—Meditate the last of the words we have quoted from Isaias, “By His bruises we are healed.” We were all sick and lepers, and this most meek Lamb offered to bathe us in His Blood in order to heal us of our guilt. If, then, love is alone repaid by love, and remedy be given for remedy—and Isaias bears witness that he beheld Christ as a leper—offer Him the blood of thy veins in order to heal Him Who healed thee ; offer Him the flesh of thy heart in order to cleanse Him Who cleansed thee, and thy soul and thy life in return for His. Let thy tongue never cease from praising Him, nor thy heart from loving Him ; let thine understanding ever contemplate Him, and do thou serve Him with thy whole being. Give thyself entirely to Him as He gave His whole self for thee. Consider how infirm thou wouldst be had not Christ healed thee, and how costly was the remedy which procured thy health, and be eternally grateful to Him for it.

*TWENTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.**For the Saturday.*

ON THE BENEFIT OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

First Point.—Consider God as the universal Father of all created things, and revered on His throne of glory, employing His wisdom and care in providing man with all that is necessary for his body and soul, so that nothing should be wanting of all that is needful to him, but rather that he should have abundance of everything, without need of soliciting aught elsewhere. Truly he who considers the greatness of the Almighty God, infinitely wise, powerful, and independent of every creature, cannot fail to marvel at beholding Him occupied, and, as it were, solicitous about a thing so insignificant and lowly as man, and that for his sake He should expend His care on the animals of the earth, the birds of the air, the fishes of the waters, and on all creatures, even to the flies, the worms, and nettles, and the most insignificant of creatures. Blessed be so good a God, and let all creatures, visible and invisible, praise and magnify Him for His infinite providence.

Second Point.—Consider the providence that God exercises over all creatures, reviewing them each separately. See how He gives to all food, lodging, clothing, and means of assisting themselves, arms for their defence, with power to propagate and continue their species ; and how He attends to the needs of all, caring for each one with as much solicitude and forethought as though it were alone in the world. Praise His Magnificence and Love, His Bounty and Generosity, and give Him thanks for all this.

Third Point.—Turn thine eyes on thyself, and consider the providence and care that the Almighty God has exercised towards thee in particular, nourishing thee with so much solicitude, visiting thee, healing thee, giving thee a residence, an occupation, possessions, and providing all

necessaries that thou canst require, in order that thou shouldst lack nothing. Consider the perils thou hast gone through, and how often thou wouldst have perished disastrously had not God delivered thee by His Infinite Providence. See how often He has provided thee, thou knewest not how, with what thou didst need, the Lord having greater care for thee than thou hadst for thyself. Ponder that thou dost not know the number of the hairs of thy head, but that God has counted them, and knows how many they are, and that He will not suffer a single one of them to fall without His permission and except for thy good. Ponder this solicitude that God exercises in thy regard, born of the love He bears thee; render thanks to Him for all these things, and prepare thyself to serve Him, and to testify thy gratitude for what He is continually doing for thee.

Fourth Point.—Consider how all the providence of God is directed to the end that thou shouldst serve Him, making use of creatures so far as is conducive to His service and to thy profit, and no more. Consider the account that thou wilt have to give of this singular benefit to thy Creator, and see how far thou hast until now made use of it to His praise, honour, and service; beg His pardon for thine ingratitude, soliciting grace to amend and to repair in the future the losses of the past. Entreat the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the Saints to intercede for thee, and to supply by their praises what is lacking to thine.

TWENTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

For the Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

ON THE GOSPEL—(MATT. VI.)

Christ teaches us in this Gospel that, as no man can serve two masters, so neither can we serve God and the world or its riches. He urges us to despise them, and to

place all our confidence in His bounty, which will sustain us, even as He nourishes and clothes the birds and the flowers of the field. And, lastly, He concludes, saying that we are to seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, that is, holiness, and all these things shall be given to us in due measure.

First Point.—Consider the opposition that exists between God and the world, between the devil and God, the spirit and the flesh, which, as St. Paul says, are always at war, and are never agreed on any point, and thus it is impossible to please both. What thou givest to the world thou must necessarily refuse to God; in what thou dost for God thou must necessarily contradict the world; and if thou followest God and the Spirit thou must oppose the appetites of the flesh. Wherefore consider who these two masters are, and which of the two thou art desirous of serving; and draw thence the resolution of not submitting to the master who does not suit thee, but of serving Him Who is the true Lord, and from Whom thou mayst receive an eternal reward.

Second Point.—Consider the littleness of thy heart, its diminutive capacity, and that its whole power is insufficient to serve God as it should, far less is it capable of serving several masters at once; and if thou canst not serve two masters, how canst thou serve as many masters as thou hast inclinations? Open thine eyes and perceive that thou dost offend God as often as thou followest them, and givest food and solace to the flesh. Observe how these masters tyrannise over thy liberty, enslave thee and disinherit thee from the kingdom of God; and, casting off the yoke of this servitude, allow them no longer to hold dominion over thee. Consider that the liberty of the flesh is the servitude of the spirit, and that the subjection of the spirit to God is the supreme liberty thereof, and the mastership by which it restrains and has dominion over the appetites of the flesh; and since God created thee to be free, do not thou subject thyself to them. Derive this resolution from thy meditation,

and beseech God to be thy Father and thy Lord, and not to permit that another should govern thee, nor that thou shouldst submit thyself to any one but to Him.

Third Point.—Meditate attentively which of these two masters thou hast heretofore served, and which thou wouldst serve in future. Behold how blind thou hast been, serving honours and riches and being a slave to thy appetites. The senses and thoughts of man are prone to evil from his birth, whilst the spirit inclines towards God Who created it. Bewail thy past life, contemplate what thou hast gained in the service of the world, and what fruit thou hast derived from all the anxiety and the efforts with which thou hast waited on thine inclinations. Behold thy strength consumed and thy hands empty, time lost and thy designs frustrated, and leave vanity to the vain, and firmly resolve to exchange the greed of earthly wealth for the holy covetousness of that which is heavenly and eternal, and shall know no end. Consider the Saints, who served God in this world, and heaped up immortal riches which they now enjoy in heaven, and will continue to enjoy eternally ; and behold likewise the rich and self-seeking, who served the world and their flesh, as did that rich man of whom St. Luke makes mention in his Gospel. See how frustrated are these latter, how wasted their labours, who have not now even a drop of water wherewith to mitigate their torments. Oh, great deception that of this world ! oh, incomparable blindness of men ! O Lord ! hold me by the hand, in order that I may not fall into the like, nor serve the world nor the devil, nor my senses and appetites, but Thee alone with all my soul, and my strength, and with my whole heart !

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ teaches us not to be solicitous about perishable things, even though it be our food, our clothing, or the necessities of life, for He has care for us ; and He who feeds the birds of the air and clothes with beauty the flowers that grow in the field, without aid of human industry or of the gardener's

art, will feed us and clothe us more splendidly than Solomon when arrayed in all his opulence. Raise thine eyes to heaven; praise the Divine Providence: see how God nourishes and clothes the birds and the fishes, the beasts and all living things; what beauty and fragrance He imparts to the flowers and herbs of the field,—what virtue He communicates to them for healing men without any toil or care on their part, and place all thy trust in Him. Unburthen thyself of all care on Him Who cares for thee; dedicate all thy mind to His service, and He will set His mind on sustaining and honouring thee. He will give thee in this life a hundredfold for one, and hereafter life eternal.

THIRTIETH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE TRUE MASTER WHOM WE SHOULD SERVE,
NAMELY, GOD OUR FATHER.

First Point.—Consider Who and What this Lord is Whom Christ exhorts us to serve, namely, God our Creator, incomparably noble, powerful, rich, tender, loving, prudent, meek, and generous, possessing in the highest degree every gift that can be desired in a sovereign prince, and most affable towards all his servants, whom He loves with the affection of a Father. If, then, men of the world esteem it highest happiness to enter into the service of the princes of the earth, and to secure posts and honourable offices in their palaces, how much more shouldst thou esteem and endeavour to enter into the service of God, to hold a post in His household, and to be employed in His service? Entreat Him to admit thee into it, and esteem it supreme felicity to be employed by Him.

Second Point.—Consider the command that this Lord lays upon His servants, and how light and easy to bear

is the yoke of His commandments, since they rather lessen labour than increase it, according to those words uttered by the Saviour Himself,¹ "Come to Me all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you. Take up My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart: and you shall find rest for your souls." For, as St. Austin says, His commandments are like the wings of the bird, which burthen it not, but rather relieve it and increase its buoyancy. God lends His arm to assist His elect to carry the weight of His precepts and counsels, and whilst He bears it they are relieved. He sets on the one side of the scale the precept, and on the other the grace and assistance wherewith to fulfil it, and thus His government is sweet and gentle and His service pleasant, free from toil and care, and from the anxieties that they endure who serve, as slaves, the masters of this world.

Third Point.—Consider the recompense and reward that this Lord bestows on His followers, for He is not like the great ones of the earth, who repay long years of service by dismissing their retainers for some trivial annoyance, and oftentimes, destroy their property for their own entertainment; but God rewards a few days of service in this life with an eternal recompense. He loves and cares for His servants as though they were His sons, giving them most liberally all that they need, as His Gospel tells us, and after this life He bestows on them the eternal rewards of His glory, crowning them like kings, for to serve Him is to reign. Contemplate these truths, and bewail the blindness of men who seek with so much eagerness to serve the kings of the earth and think not of serving the King of heaven, the service of the former being so arduous, that of the latter so easy, the one so full of toil, the other so pleasant, the former so vain, the latter so stable, the one profitless, the other productive of eternal rewards. Beg of God to open their eyes in order that they may see the truth, and entreat

¹ Matt. xi.

Him especially to enlighten thine lest the tinsel of this world blind thee with its glitter, or lest by false appearances it distract and mislead thee into neglecting, for the sake of frail and perishable men, the Divine and Heavenly Emperor Who recompenses His servants with unfailing rewards.

Fourth Point.—Consider another characteristic of this Master, which is, that He will admit no fellowship, nor will He allow Himself to be loved together with His creatures. God asks for our whole heart without allowing any share to creatures; wherefore the Saviour says that we cannot serve God and mammon, for He will not accept any partnership, nor admit of a divided affection. Ponder how, when the ark of the covenant entered the temple of the Philistines, their idol Dagon fell to the ground broken into a thousand pieces; for our God is a jealous God, Who permits not the love of idols, of honours, of riches, or pleasures, nor earthly affections, but requires that we should love Him with all the strength of our heart. Wherefore enter into the temple of thy soul and purify it of all worldly attachments; overthrow the idols that thou hast heretofore worshipped; desire and love this Master alone. Entreat Him to be thine, and to make thee His own, to serve Him only, doing in all things His Divine will, as the angels serve Him eternally in heaven.

THIRTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE TYRANNY OF THE DEVIL, WHOM WORLDLINGS SERVE.

First Point.—Christ makes mention of two masters in the Gospel. The first and real master is God, of Whom we spoke in the preceding meditation. The second is the devil, as St. Austin affirms, the prince of this world and ruler of its darkness, whose tyranny, says the Saint,

is most oppressive, and whose yoke is insupportable. Consider, first, who this master is, and thou wilt discover him to be of all creatures the most vile, the most abject, the poorest, the most despised and infamous ; coarse, powerless, without knowledge or strength, without intellect, or virtue, or hope, or possibility of any ; condemned to eternal death and to perpetual imprisonment in the dungeons of hell ; the father of lies and deceit, whereby he blinds and precipitates to destruction those who serve him. Beg of God light to discover his wiles ; entreat Him to hold thee by the hand, that thou be not deceived and led to thy perdition, and to assist likewise all men to know and despise this enemy, and not to fall into his snares.

Second Point.—Consider how very heavy is the burthen of this master's commands, and how unendurable is his rule. How pitiless, unmerciful, full of severity, of fatigue and labour, are his laws ; for, as a tyrant, he only seeks to do evil and destroy men. Wherefore God says¹ by His prophet, "There is no peace to the wicked," for even when they exclaim "Peace, peace !" they suffer a continual strife from their evil consciences, and are oppressed by the heavy weight of their sins. Behold what is endured by those who covet wealth, by sea and land, by sun and wind, by water and by fire ; exiled from their homes, enjoying no rest, even for a single day. Behold the ambitious, who for a breath of honour go about continually oppressed with care, devoured by envy at the sight of the advantages others enjoy. Enumerate in like manner all the other vices, and thou wilt find that each is a heavy burthen to its followers. Such is the government of the devil, these his precepts and commandments. Beseech the Lord to deliver thee from so oppressive a thralldom.

Third Point.—Consider the penury that his servants endure, the slavery to his wishes in which they live. "The rich," says David,² "have wanted, and have

¹ Isa. xlviii.

² Ps. xxxiii.

suffered hunger ; but they that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good ; ” and if even the very rich suffer thus, what must not others undergo ? Remember the prodigal son, who went forth from his father’s house rich and honoured, and, after abiding awhile in that of this tyrant, he found himself poor, penniless, and despoiled, overladen with miseries and utterly destitute. Thus is it with all who are so ill-advised as to serve this tyrant and to submit to his yoke. Do not thou follow this course, but take counsel with God ; recognise the tyranny of Satan and the severity of his rule ; fly from it, and attach thyself to the household of God. Behold how the prodigal son, of whom we were speaking, found in his father’s house the honour, repose, and abundance that he had forfeited by straying from it ; the like will befall thee and all those who return to the house of God.

Fourth Point.—Consider the reward with which at last this tyrant repays his servants, reserving the bitterest torments of hell for those who in this life have been most faithful in serving him. The bottomless abyss is his kingdom, coals of fire are his crowns, gloomy dungeons his paradise, hideous yells his music, gall and vinegar viands of his table ; whilst for drink he offers burning sulphur, for a couch thorns and brambles amidst serpents and scorpions, for repose eternal torments which shall find no relief. Such is the remuneration that this most cruel master reserves for his servants. How is it possible that there should be found in the world any one to serve him ? Oh, deplorable blindness of those who abandon the service of God in order to obey such a tyrant ! Lay stress on the consideration of all that has been said, and beseech God with all the tenderness of thy soul to undeceive mortals, and to send preachers who shall enlighten them, that they may no longer precipitate themselves into such horrible darkness. Implore Him to hold them by the hand, that they may not serve so tyrannical a sovereign ; that, despising his wiles and

evident deceits, they may serve the true and supreme God with their whole heart, to Whom do thou offer thine, to love Him and serve Him eternally without end.

THIRTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE DIGNITY AND VALUE OF THE SOUL.

First Point.—Consider how Christ says that the life is more than the meat, and the body more than the raiment. If, therefore, thou dost so esteem thy body that in order to feed, to clothe, and to preserve it, thou sparest no care or toil, and every effort appears trifling to thee for that purpose, what shouldst thou not do for thy soul, which so far exceeds the body in value? Ponder how God formed thee of two parts, namely, of soul and body, which are bound together with the bond of life. The body is material, and the soul is spiritual; thou art not a pure spirit like the angels, nor art thou wholly material like the animals, but composed partly of a soul which is spiritual, and partly of a body which is material. Thy soul is as much a portion of thyself as is thy body, and of the two parts the more noble and precious is the soul, and the less important is the body. Blush, therefore, in the presence of God to see how much thou dost for thy body and how little for thy soul; how abject and solicitous thou canst be for temporal concerns, and how little thou dost for those that are spiritual, and implore grace of our Lord to amend and to appreciate each thing at its true value.

Second Point.—Consider the nobility of the soul, created to give life to thy body, by the infinite power of God; not made of dust like thy flesh, but a pure spirit, created after the image and likeness of God, enriched with the three powers of understanding, memory, and will, and

with many other gifts, whereby it resembles the angels ; and, finally, created for the purpose of beholding and enjoying God eternally in His glory. Ponder how much greater is the worth of thy soul than of the whole earth, and that, as Christ said,¹ it would profit a man nothing to gain the whole world if he lost his soul, for it is worth more than all else. Perceive hence how thou shouldst prize this jewel, and what thou shouldst do and endure rather than lose it and in order to preserve it untarnished.

Third Point.—In addition to what we have already said, consider the permanent duration of the soul's existence, for it is eternal and imperishable, and will live for ever. Dig deep into the thought of this duration, and compare therewith the limited existence of the body and of all those temporal things that men so greatly prize, which scarcely appear and are no more, whilst for many their beginning and ending are one, and the most enduring last but a moment in regard to eternity. To what intellect, then, can it be possible to so highly prize that which is so worthless, and to underrate a jewel of such great value as is the soul? Reflect on thyself, and consider that what thou dost for thy soul will afford thee joy for an eternity ; enliven thy faith ; extend thy gaze into the direction of the next world, and implore of God not to allow thee to be blinded by the false lustre of temporal things, but to grant that all thy care and solicitude may be directed towards those that are eternal.

Fourth Point.—Consider, lastly, how Christ valued thy soul, since He purchased it at the price of His blood, which, as St. Bernard affirms, He would not have given for the whole universe ; and were the whole world thine, thou couldst not therewith redeem thy soul. Weep and lament before the throne of God at the sight and thought of the vile price for which thou hast yielded thy soul to Satan as often as thou hast committed a mortal sin. Behold how often thou hast bartered it away for a momentary pleasure, for a vile interest, and even for

¹ Matt. xviii.

things of less value. Bewail thine error with bitter grief, and purpose amendment in the presence of the Lord. Ponder that thou hast but one soul, and that if thou lose that soul all is lost, and resolve to die a thousand deaths rather than suffer it to perish, and God will give thee His grace not to undervalue that which cost Him so dear.

THIRTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE PROVIDENCE WITH WHICH GOD WATCHES OVER THOSE
WHO TRUST IN HIS GOODNESS.

First Point.—Consider how Christ tells us not to be solicitous about our food or clothing, or about temporal things, because our Heavenly Father knows our needs, and has care to foresee them, in order that we may want for nothing. Wherein thou shouldst ponder that He calls God our Father, for no father is so loving towards his children as He, nor so solicitous and thoughtful of all their wants, nor so far-seeing in providing for them, in order that they may lack nothing, as God is towards his chosen ones. For He loves them more than they can love themselves, and He cares for all their concerns with greater care than they can exercise; and thus He only asks of them to be solicitous of serving Him and He will be solicitous of sustaining them. O Divine Lord, loving Father! blessed be Thou who conferrest on us so many benefits. I rejoice, my Lord and my God, to have such a Father, possessing Whom I need naught else. Give me grace to fulfil my duty by being truly a son in my love and service of Thee.

Second Point.—Consider how God feeds and cares for all creatures, and for thee in particular. Behold the beauty of the birds, the magnificence of the fields strewn

with flowers, the purity of the streams, the grandeur of the heavens studded with stars, the splendour of the sun and the moon, and the comeliness of all creatures. Then pass on to contemplate the celestial beings, whereof all this is but as a mere outline, and no more than a faint shadow. Think and consider what must be the beauty of heaven when that of the earth is so great, and that God has prepared all this by His infinite providence for thee, that thou mayst enjoy it and glorify Him eternally. All this belongs to His providence and to the care He has of thee : render Him many thanks for it, and offer thyself anew with great gratitude to His service.

Third Point. — Consider the intention of God in exercising such far-seeing providence in thy regard, as expressed by Christ in the Gospel, namely, that thou shouldst set aside all temporal cares and place all thy confidence in Him. Not that this should be done so entirely as though thou didst expect to be supported by miracle, but, as St. Jerome says, renouncing all solicitude and superfluous anxiety, which is always somewhat mixed with distrust, and placing all thy confidence in the providence of God. He cares for thee in order that thou shouldst care for His service, He provides for thy temporal wants in order that thou shouldst seek after spiritual things. He gives thee that which is more, namely, the soul, and the graces and assistance needful for the journey to heaven, in order that thou shouldst confide in His mercy, that He will also give thee that which is less, namely, earthly things, so that nothing may be wanting to thee. Trust in the Lord and thou wilt abound in all good things. This resolution, then, thou shouldst draw from this meditation, to unburthen thyself of all thy cares on God, and to trust most steadfastly in His pity as in that of a most tender and solicitous Father, and He will always protect thee. If, as St. Theresa of Jesus says, the lords of the earth consider it an affront that their servants should be anxious and full of care as to how they will be maintained, how much greater an insult

is it not towards God that His servants should want confidence in Him, and be fearful that they should lack what is needful in His service.

Fourth Point.—Consider, lastly, how the Saviour winds up, saying, "Seek ye, therefore, first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." Wherein thou shouldst ponder that Christ is not content with our desiring the kingdom of God and His justice, that is, His grace, which produces justice and sanctity, but that we must do so earnestly, with greater solicitude and diligence than worldlings seek after wealth and exert themselves in the pursuit of riches. Lay stress on the consideration of the care that men of the world expend and on the steps they take in order to secure the perishable goods of earth, and see how the Lord requires of thee yet greater diligence in seeking after the spiritual wealth of the soul, whereby thou wilt enrich thyself with both, for He will grant these to thee, and temporal ones also over and above. See on what thou hast spent thy care until now. what fruit thou hast derived from thy exertions, and wherein thou shouldst employ them henceforth. Consider thyself as a pilgrim upon earth, where thou hast no fixed abode, neither is thy permanent dwelling-place here below. In the Heavenly Jerusalem thy home awaits thee; there thou canst abide for ever, whilst here thou wilt reside but a short time. Glide, then, rapidly past the things of earth; little of them suffices, and that will not fail thee if thou place thy trust in God, as we have said, and seek in the first place His kingdom and His justice.

*THIRTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.**For the Friday.*ON DIVINE PROVIDENCE WITH REGARD TO THE SPIRITUAL
RICHES OF THE SOUL.

First Point.—Consider that, if God exercises His providence so that man may lack nothing needful for the support of his body, He will with far greater care provide that nothing shall fail him of what is necessary for his soul, since, as the Lord Himself says, it is of so much greater worth and excellence, and its end life eternal, towards which it tends, is so much more exalted. Recall to mind the spiritual needs of the soul and the eternal riches for which it is destined; and contemplate the providence and paternal care that God extends to all souls in general, and to thine in particular, that they should want for nothing in order to acknowledge His benefits, and be grateful for those He has conferred and continually bestows upon thee. Consider, in the first place, how assiduous and thoughtful God has been in giving thee His assistance and graces for the performance of good works meritorious for eternal life, without which thou couldst not have done anything pleasing in His sight. Behold how many benefits this one supposes, and how many graces are contained in this grace, without which thou couldst never have performed a single good work. Thus thou owest to the Divine Providence and liberality whatever good of this kind thou hast ever executed. Humble thyself in the presence of God, and render Him thanks for this, lest thine ingratitude render thee unworthy of receiving fresh graces and mercies from His hand.

Second Point.—Consider how Divine Providence prevents and arms thee with the grace of God, in order that thou shouldst not be overcome by temptations, and fall

into the hands of thine enemies. Consider the care that God has taken of thee, and how timely has been His assistance, proposing good thoughts to thee with which to oppose the evil ones suggested by the Devil, good counsels against the wicked whisperings of false friends ; withdrawing thee from opportunities of sin, and affording thee opportunities of doing good. Consider, moreover, the measure wherein God has permitted thee to be tempted, first taking into account thy dispositions, and furnishing thee with arms proportioned to thy strength, in order that thou shouldst not fall into sin, but rather shouldst come forth victorious from the battle. His purpose in these temptations was also thy greater good in this life, urging thee on in His service, and to arm thyself against thine enemies with great increase of merits, by penance, vigils, communions, prayers, and corporal labours ; and likewise, in the next, where He will bestow on thee the eternal reward of glory. Derive hence sentiments of gratitude towards Him who thus arms thee, teaches thee how to fight, and gives thee the victory over thine enemies ; take courage to despise them, and place great confidence in the goodness of God, that He will succour thee in all thy conflicts, and bring thee victoriously out of them.

Third Point.—Consider, in like manner, the providence that God exercises over thee in all the infirmities and adverse events that befall thee in this world, which are in a manner part of the warfare waged against thy soul, which they attack by striving to make thee yield to impatience, distrust, and weariness of spiritual things. Remember that not a leaf on the trees is stirred but by the will of God, and that His Divine Majesty keeps an exact account of the very hairs of thy head, not one of which does he permit to fall except by an especial provision of His will and providence for thy welfare. He likewise knows and directs all that befalls thee, whether prosperous or adverse, and everything is decreed and ordered according to His holy will. He measures

out the sickness that afflicts thee ; by His permission thine enemy speaks ill of thee ; thou art contradicted and persecuted ; tempests ruin thy property, mortality cuts off thy succession, and thou art afflicted by various adversities of whatever kind. He could most easily prevent them, but He does not, because it is not for thy good that He should do so ; rather it is He who, by an especial dispensation, sends all these trials to thee, in order that thou shouldst humble thyself, suffer, and fight with the patience that becomes a soldier of Christ, and in His company thus secure the crown. Consider what conflicts the Saviour had to undergo ; raise thine eyes to His cross, and see whether thy trials will bear comparison with His. Reflect whether His Eternal Father loved Him less than thee, and since, being able so easily to deliver Him, He yet left Him to suffer, because it so behoved for His glory and for ours, resign thyself to His will whenever He allows thee to suffer. Let not thy heart fail within thee, neither do thou turn against thy persecutors, but rather accept the bitter chalice as from the hand of the Lord, like holy Job ; for all these things are dispensations of His Divine Providence, and tend to His greater glory, and to the profit of thy soul.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Divine Providence distributes natural as well as supernatural talents, the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and especial graces, according to those words of St. Paul,¹ “The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man unto profit.” To one the gift of tongues, to another of prophecy, to others of miracles, to others of casting out devils, and to others of healing the sick in the power of the same Spirit. All these gifts are the effects of God’s providence with regard to the souls of men, and of thine in particular, and all are directed to thy greater profit. Consider the talents that God has intrusted to thee ; see how thou hast employed them, and what account thou wilt give of them ; and derive hence, first, sorrow and contrition for the little that thou

¹ 1 Cor. xii.

hast profited, and resolutions of labouring to render thy talents more productive in future. Secondly, elicit sentiments of gratitude towards the Lord for the gifts that He has bestowed on thee, and which He has not granted to others, who would have derived greater fruit from them, and have served Him better than thou. Thirdly, excite in thyself a great conformity to the will of God concerning what He has bestowed, as also with regard to those things that He has refused thee, because by His Divine Providence He foresaw that they were not for thy good, and that had He granted them to thee thou wouldst have grown vain, or have fallen into other vices whereby thou wouldst have been lost. Humble thyself, and submit to His most holy will, giving thanks to Him for all things.

THIRTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON DIVINE PROVIDENCE WITH REGARD TO VOCATIONS TO STATES OF LIFE, AND ESPECIALLY TO THE RELIGIOUS STATE.

First Point.—Consider how Divine Providence rules the vocations of men to various states of life, destining each individual to that one in which by His infinite wisdom God knows he will be best able to serve Him. Whence thou shouldst learn two things: first, to submit thyself to His Divine Will in the one appointed for thee, acknowledging it to be the one most conducive to thy salvation, and that if another were given thee, though perchance in itself more perfect, thou mightst be lost as others have been. Secondly, if thou hast not chosen a state of life, respond to the Divine Voice selecting the one it proposes to thee, and not consulting thine own fancies or those of thy parents, relations, or friends; because thou wilt not make a wise election by following their

wishes, but by adhering to the will of God, who calls thee to that which is best for thee. Trust to His word, and confide in God's providence that He will give thee grace according to thy vocation, and proportion thy strength to the burthen, giving thee assistance suitable to the state of life to which He calls thee, in order that thou mayst serve Him therein.

Second Point.—Consider the duties of the state of life in which God has placed thee, and whether thou fulfillest them, profiting by this benefit to serve Him better. Recall the favours that He has conferred on thee by this means, and how much thou owest Him for them. Implore of God to add this one grace more to the rest, to make thee grateful, and that thou mayst fulfil all thy duties, especially those of thy state of life, according to His holy will.

Third Point.—Consider the mercy that God has shown towards thee in calling thee to so excellent a state, especially if thou be a priest or a religious, in order that thou shouldst serve Him perfectly, withdrawing thee from so many occasions of perdition, and leading thee to His house, and to the society of so many holy persons, who by their examples and words assist thee on thy road to heaven. Consider how many He has left on the perilous sea of this world, exposed to so many dangers, who, had they been taken out of it and brought to the haven of religion, would have served Him better than thou, and have rendered him more fervent thanks for this benefit; whilst thou, to whom God has granted this grace, dost not render Him either the service or the gratitude that thou owest. Cast thyself at His feet, implore His forgiveness, and see how thou shouldst serve Him in future, in order to fulfil thy duty.

Fourth Point.—Consider how God has, by His Divine Providence, guided thee from thy childhood towards the state of life in which He has placed thee, bestowing on thee graces, assistance, inspirations, good counsels and examples, and subduing thy stubbornness, until at last

He has brought thee to His house, and made thee a priest, if such thou be, or given thee some other post or dignity in His Church. Consider the elevation to which He has raised thee, the dignity He has conferred on thee, the obligations thereby imposed, how thou hast heretofore fulfilled them, and how thou canst accomplish them in future. Beg of the Lord grace to persevere in thy state of life, and to progress therein, striving each day to serve Him better, which is the gratitude that He requires from thee.

THIRTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

ON THE GOSPEL—(LUKE VII.)

The Gospel for to-day relates how Christ, on entering the city of Naim, raised a young man to life, to the great comfort of his widowed mother; and how the inhabitants of the city, filled with awe, praised and glorified the Saviour.

First Point.—Contemplate the picture that the Gospel sets before thine eyes in this corpse of a youth, rich, well connected, the only son of his mother, beloved as such, the heir of his house, laid out on a bier, and carried to the grave to be left with the rest of the dead in a dismal sepulchre. Contemplate therein the end we must all come to, the poor and the rich, the great and the little, the noble and the plebeian, the old and the young. Here no relief is found in riches or parents, no immunity in youth. Death respects no one; neither is a single hour secure, for it as often lays its finger on the young man in the flower of his age as on the old man whose hair is bleached with years, like the harvest ready for the sickle. This truth God made manifest from the beginning of the world, when of the four first persons who were created,

Abel, who was the youngest, was the first to die, in order to teach us that death follows no law of precedence, and that neither are the young secure from it on account of their youth, nor the old because of their age. Taking all this into consideration, reflect on thyself, and see what will befall thee. Death is inevitable, and thou knowest neither the time nor the place in which it will seize thee, wherefore it behoves thee to be prepared at all times and in all places.

Second Point.—Meditate the description St. Luke gives of this young man who was being conveyed to the grave ; behold him cold and stiff, swathed with bands, lifeless on a bier, borne on their shoulders by four men, who weep for him and carry him to the tomb, leaving behind all that he possessed here, whilst a poor winding-sheet alone remains to him of all his wealth. Consider that the like will be thy lot within a brief period ; that thou hast to die, to be placed in a shroud, and carried on a bier, whilst the bells toll, thy friends weep, and the clergy chant the office for the dead ; that thou wilt be buried in a foul place, and covered with earth like other corpses, leaving behind thee in this world all thou dost possess and all thou mayst acquire. Deliberately contemplate thyself there interred, whilst all the survivors return to their homes, to divide thy property, and make display therewith. Recognise the vanity of this world, and the error of mortals in esteeming themselves ; behold how all must end, and learn to despise all things for the love of Christ and the profit of thy soul.

Third Point.—See how the mother of this youth and many persons of the city accompanied his body to the grave, which was all they could do, the soul having to appear alone with its works before the tribunal of God. Contemplate what occurs on like occasions, and how the honours of this world and its friendships cannot follow us beyond the grave, and that when thou art dead thy dearest friends will be the most anxious to bury thee, to remove thee quickly from their home, and to carry thee

like other corpses to the tomb, and leave thee there to rot. Meanwhile thy soul will go forth alone into unknown regions, accompanied only by its works, the good ones for thy salvation, the evil ones for thy condemnation. Ponder, O sinner ! what thou wouldst then wish to have done ; and as God grants thee the opportunity, prepare thyself for the future ; await not the time when it will no longer be possible to thee to help thyself, and when what thou dost now will alone avail thee. Draw hence this conclusion, to do now what thou wouldst wish to have done at the hour of thy death.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ, seeing the tears of the mother, told her not to weep, for that He would restore her son to life, and that in a short time her sorrow should be changed into joy. Take to thyself this lesson, and grieve not for temporal losses, which may so soon be repaired. Come to Christ and He will console thee ; keep thy tears to weep for thy sins and for those of the people, therewith to implore of God the remedy of so many evils, and that by the virtue of His word and the power of His grace He will restore life to the souls that are dead, and He will take care to comfort thee.

THIRTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE SHORTNESS OF LIFE AND THE THOUGHT OF DEATH.

First Point.—Behold how brief life is, and how uncertain is its duration, as manifested in this youth, who attained his end when scarcely beginning to live, and even after Christ had restored him to life, it was for so short a period that for already many hundred years he has been dust in the grave. “From the womb to the grave,” as Job says,¹ from the bosom of his mother to that of our common mother the earth, the life of man is but

¹ Job x.

a breath, which passes away in a moment most briefly, whilst the life to come is eternal, and will endure for ever. Consider the blindness of those who heap up wealth for this short life forgetful of eternity, and who, in order to secure honours and riches here below, are consumed with anxiety and continual strivings, whilst they move not a step to enrich themselves for a future life with virtue and works of mercy and penance. Bewail their shortsightedness, and, taking warning from them, allow not thyself to be deceived by the folly of this world, but store up for thyself eternal riches.

Second Point.—Consider that the Gospel says that this youth was being carried to the grave; for, as St. Peter Chrysologus remarks on this passage, we are all unceasingly carried on to the grave by time, and whilst thou readest these pages thou art hurrying onwards to the tomb. Life is like a river, that ever flows on towards the deep abyss of the sea, which is its grave. Each day of thy life thou drawest nearer to its close; to-day thou art nearer than yesterday, and to-morrow thou wilt be closer than to-day; the time that is past returns not, no more than the water of the river remounts the stream. Draw hence great fervour in making a good use of time, so as to secure eternal glory, and resolve to lose no opportunity that God may afford thee of doing good and acquiring merit. Never postpone progress to the future, for the present opportunity once lost another might never occur wherein to merit. Draw hence likewise a firm resolution of doing penance during the short time that life endures, and of exercising great patience, since by such brief labours thou canst purchase an eternal reward. Lastly, let this thought of the shortness of life undeceive thee of the value of temporal things, and teach to despise them, and to covet only those that are eternal.

Third Point.—Consider how St. Paul says¹ that death is the reward and wages of sin, and, writing to the Corinthians,² he calls sin “the sting of death,” as it were

¹ Rom. vi.

² 1 Cor. xv.

the goad and spur that urges it to travel quickly on by rapid stages, so as to seize the sinner sooner than it would have done had he followed the path of virtue instead of yielding himself up to his vices. Oh, how many are cut off in the midst of their days, in the flower of their youth, like this young man, because they abandoned themselves to vice, who would have lived long years had they given themselves to the practice of virtue ! Reflect on those whom thou hast known in the course of thy life, and bewail their misfortune, as this mother wept the death of her son. Derive hence a warning not to shorten thy life by sin, but to fly it both on account of the temporal death it hastens and far more because of the eternal death it merits. If temporal death be so bitter, how much more so must not eternal death be ? Seek, in the first place, to avoid the latter, and God will preserve thee from both.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ was moved to pity for the mother who wept for her dead son. Behold with what benignity and mercy He told her not to weep, comforting her in her bitter sorrow, banishing her grief with words of life, and restoring her lost son to her. Oh, most sweet Jesus ! blessed be Thou for Thy clemency towards the afflicted ; and since Thou givest consolation to all, leave me not unrelieved ; speak one word to my soul and forthwith it will recover life. Derive hence compassion for the afflicted and a lesson how to comfort the sorrowful and to show mercy to all, after the example of Christ. Learn where true consolation is to be found, namely, not in creatures but in the Creator. Knock at the door of His mercy whenever thou art in distress, and thou wilt find relief, consolation, and true joy for thy soul.

THIRTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION;**For the Tuesday.****ON THE DEATH OF THE SOUL.**

First Point.—Consider in this youth, who was being carried out of the city to the grave, the person of a sinner, of which he is the type, who carries in a living body a soul dead to the grace of the Lord, and to whom the words of St. John in the Apocalypse apply,¹ “Thou hast the name of being alive, and thou art dead.” The body of the sinner is the coffin which contains the dead soul, carried away by its appetites, which hurry it along to be buried in hell. Ponder the hideousness of a corpse without movement or life, with eyes that see not, hands that can labour no more, ears deaf to every sound, and feet powerless to stir a single step. Such is the condition of a soul in the state of sin, hideous and abominable in the sight of God and of His angels. The sinner is so devoid of life that he has no eyes wherewith to behold his misfortune, no hands for good works, no ears for the voice of God, nor feet to go in search of salvation, but like a corpse he is dragged along by the force of his evil inclinations. Oh, miserable condition, worthy indeed of being wept with tears of blood! Contemplate the blindness and misery of such a soul, the disastrous end and horrible grave towards which it is being conveyed, and implore God to hold thee by the hand lest thou fall into this death; beg of Him also to arouse and restore to life all who have succumbed to it.

Second Point.—Consider how a dead body, besides having none of the power of action that belongs to the living, becomes corrupt and breeds worms, and soon exhales such noxious odours that it is carried away to be buried lest it infect the city. The like of all this befalls

¹ Apoc. iii.

the soul of the sinner who dies to grace ; it soon becomes the prey of evil inclinations, and the corruption of its habits exhales so infectious an odour of bad example by a life of scandal, that God commands it to be withdrawn from the world lest others be infected with its vices. Lay stress on the consideration of those sinners whom thou hast known ; contemplate the disorder of their lives, the scandals they gave, and their disastrous end. Derive from this meditation a great hatred for sin, desires of avoiding it thyself, and as far as thou canst of hindering it in others, lest they fall into so deplorable a condition. Bewail the scandal thou hast given by thy wicked life ; give thanks to God for having borne with thee and given thee time for repentance, and fervently implore His grace to amend in the future.

Third Point.—Consider how bitterly the mother of this youth wept the death of the son she so tenderly loved, wherein is typified the Church, which, as a pitiful mother, bewails the dead souls of her children who have lost the life of grace. Consider their blindness, 'since, whilst the Church weeps for them, they alone weep not for themselves, but rather, deaf and blind that they are, make merry when they should grieve, and precipitate themselves into fresh vices instead of doing penance for the past. O madmen ! how derided will ye find yourselves at the end of the journey, and how bitterly will ye then weep the mirth in which you now indulge ; but you will then bewail yourselves in vain, without finding remedy or relief. Turn thine eyes on thyself and consider how many times the Church has wept thee as dead whilst thou wert joyful and callous in thy vices. Reflect on thyself and bewail thy blindness ; beg of God to pardon thee and to give thee grace never more to sin, and to be full of charity towards thy neighbour. Associate thyself with thy mother the Church in her sorrow, weeping, lamenting with her, and crying aloud to the Lord for the conversion of sinners ; and be confident that, as He took pity on this youth because of his mother's tears, so will

He likewise take pity upon them, having regard to the tears shed by those who make intercession for them.

Fourth Point.—Consider, lastly, the grave to which souls dead to grace are carried, namely, hell. Ponder that if it be so terrible to bury a live man amongst the dead, where horrible exhalations and corruption shall consume and terminate his existence, how much more terrible it must be to be buried alive in hell, in its frightful flames, amidst scorpions and serpents, in that fire which torments eternally without consuming, where life and death are united! Remember that rich man of the Gospel who was clothed in purple and feasted sumptuously, of whom Christ says that, his life ended,¹ “he was buried in hell.” Such is the grave that awaits those dead in the soul; there do their pleasures and inordinate appetites lead them. Contemplate this abode, its tortures and associates; ponder its eternal duration, without remission or relief, and live in fear of finding such a grave and ending thy life in such horrible torments. And since the means to avoid it is to return to the life of grace, beseech Christ to restore this life to thee, as He restored to the widow’s son the life of the body.

THIRTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE RESURRECTION OF THE SINNER TO THE LIFE OF GRACE.

First Point.—Consider how St. Thomas,² quoting from the Venerable Bede, says that as in this youth, when dead, we see represented, as in a mirror, the death of the sinner to the life of grace, so also in his resurrection is portrayed that of the sinner from the death of sin to the spiritual life of the soul. Consider then that the first

¹ Luke xvi.

² S. Thom. in Catena.

means towards the resurrection of this youth were the tears of those who wept over him. By tears his restoration to life was begun, and Christ was thereby moved to pity him. The conversion of the sinner also commences by tears, and the restoration of lost grace to his soul begins when he weeps and bewails his sins with true contrition and a firm purpose of amendment. Consider thy sins and the offences that thou hast committed against God. Behold thy soul dead; see the ravages that sin has wrought on her; weep bitterly this death in the presence of God, and He will have mercy upon thee, and will restore to thee the life of grace thou hast lost.

Second Point.—Consider how all the advantages that accrued to this dead youth sprang from the circumstance of his meeting Christ whilst being carried to the grave. Thus does the happiness of the sinner depend on his coming in contact with the Saviour. Oh, that thou didst place thyself in His presence, where He could gaze on thee with the eyes of His clemency! But how shall he seek God who has so often fled from Him, and who has forsaken life to embrace death? Oh, Life of my Soul! how blind have I been when I fled from Thee! Where could I go when I separated myself from Thee? Thou camest out to meet this dead youth in order to give him life: come forth also to meet this sinner, more than dead, for he is already corrupt with the corruption of vice, in order to restore me to life. Let not my hideousness and evil odour offend Thee, Who heededst not the stench of Lazarus four days dead. I have been dead yet longer, but Thy mercy exceeds my sinfulness. Manifest it, O Lord, towards me. Touch me and detain me before I am buried in hell.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ touched the bier and called to the young man, who recovered life at His command. Thus does God call the sinner to arise from the death of vice. Place thy hand on thy breast; consider how many times God has touched thy heart in order to recall thee to thyself, how often He has called to thee to

open thine eyes and arise from the sleep of sin in which thou art immersed, and how obstinate and rebellious thou hast been to His inspirations, and how worse than deaf thou hast been to His voice, turning against thy Creator. Arouse thyself now, for it is time to hearken to Him, lest He summons thee to His tribunal ; for it might well be that, shouldst thou now disobey His call, He might speak to thee no more. Ponder how the dead obey His voice and return to life at His command. Be not thou more hardened than the dead and more deaf than a corpse. Hear Him calling and saying to thee, as to this youth, "I say to thee arise" from the state of sin, arise from thy evil customs, arise from thy sensuality ; arise from thy forgetfulness of God and of thy salvation ; arise to the knowledge of God, to prayer and penance ; arise to a new life which God offers thee. Cast thyself at His feet, and say with Samuel,¹ "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth ;" touch my heart, call me ; I offer myself humbly to obey Thee forthwith, and to execute whatever Thou shalt command.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the young man arose forthwith and spoke, and doubtless the first words he uttered were in praise of Christ, Who had restored him to life, wherein St. Thomas perceives strong evidence of his resurrection. God requires the like from thee, and that thou shouldst give similar proofs of thy spiritual resurrection. Arise, then, from vice ; abandon the occasions of sin, proclaim the praises of God ; loosen thy tongue to confess thy faults, and begin a new life, as of one arisen from the dead. Meditate attentively on all this ; consider how important this resurrection is to thee, and direct thine actions in the presence of God in the manner best calculated to advance His service and the welfare of thy soul. He will assist thee, and thou wilt secure fruits of grace and spiritual resurrection.

¹ 1 Kings iii.

*FORTIETH MEDITATION.**For the Thursday.*ON THE FRUITS OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT OF THE
ALTAR.

First Point.—St. Cyril, discoursing on this Gospel, tells us that Christ touched this youth in his coffin, in order to restore him to life, thus giving evidence that His most sacred Flesh has power to bestow spiritual life, and that It communicates this life to those who receive It worthily. Wherefore Christ calls His Sacramental Body the Bread of Life; for he that eats of this bread shall live for ever. The first fruit, then, of this Divine Food is to banish from the soul the death of sin, preserving in it the life of grace. Consider how often thou hast received and how many times thou hast touched this Sacred Bread, and see whether thou be dead or alive to God's grace and His service or to thy passions and inordinate appetites, and tremble lest thou receive It unworthily, since It works not in thee the effects It should produce in those who receive worthily.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ said that the ancients eat manna in the desert and yet died, but that it shall not be thus with those who eat of this Heavenly Manna, for they shall live for ever. Christ arose to die no more. Thus is it to be with those who receive His most Sacred Body, arisen and glorious in this Divine Food. They are to arise to the life of grace, never to return again to the death of sin, nor to fall back into past vices. Consider whether this Sacred Food produces in thee effects of this nature, and see what account thou wilt give to God of the Bread thou eatest, and of thy manner of life. Beg pardon of God for thy tepidity; prepare thyself to be grateful to Him for the favours thou receivest, and implore likewise His grace to develop in thy soul the fruits He produces in those who receive Him worthily.

Third Point.—Consider what were the effects wrought in this youth by his resurrection and by the life that Christ restored to him. He heard God's voice; he arose and began to speak, commencing a new life from that moment. Such are the effects that should produce in thee the visitation and touch of the Lord, Who comes sacramentally to visit thy soul and to give it life in the coffin of thy body. Thy ears should be opened to hear His voice, thy conscience roused to feel His touch, and to respond to the knocks He gives at the door of thy heart, and all thy senses should be purified. Thou shouldst arise from thy tepidity and sensuality to a life of fervour and mortification. Open thy mouth to pray and to praise God, rendering Him continual thanks for the favours bestowed on thee, and begin a new life dedicated to His holy service. O Lord! would that I had virtue and grace to produce such fruits to Thy honour! Touch my heart with the impulse of Thy most efficacious grace, in order that I may generate and develop these fruits through Holy Communion.

Fourth Point.—Consider what took place at the resurrection of this young man. His youth was renewed, and so likewise is the soul renovated that receives Christ. All those who witnessed the miracle were filled with the fear of God, and of esteem and veneration for Christ, and they broke forth into His praises, extolling unceasingly His power, and giving thanks to God. Intense also is the joy of the angels, and of all the heavenly court, when a soul hears the voice of God and prepares to receive Him worthily. Great likewise is the edification afforded to men, who, moved by the example offered to them, serve and honour God, and receive Him into their souls. O Lord! restore my voice as Thou didst to this youth; touch me as Thou didst him; extend Thy hand over me, and raise me from death to life! Give this joy to the angels, this edification to men; change my tepidity into fervour, my evil life into a good one. Grant me grace to receive Thee at least once worthily, that, by

the communication of Thy life to my soul, I may begin a new life in Thy holy service.

FORTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE CROSS AND PASSION OF CHRIST WHEREBY OUR
RESURRECTION IS ACHIEVED.

First Point.—The blessed St. Ambrose, explaining this miracle, says that Christ restored to life this youth, the type of the sinner, because he was carried on the wood that Christ touched. This wood is a figure of the cross, by means of which Christ was to give new life to men, bringing them out of the darkness and death of sin into the light and life of grace by the virtue communicated to it through contact with His most Sacred Body. Ponder the great power of the humanity of the Saviour, which communicated to a dry piece of wood, till then an instrument of death and infamy in the world, such virtue, by touching it and dying thereon, that it has thereby become an instrument of life for the resurrection of the dead. Fix thine eyes on the crucifix ; behold Christ nailed to the wood, bestowing on it virtue and life in order to communicate them to the world. Render Him a thousand thanks and praises for so doing, and let thy soul unceasingly wonder and rejoice at the greatness of thy God.

Second Point.—Consider the new life that Christ bestowed on this youth by means of touching the wood on which he was carried, and behold therein that which He confers on those who are associated with Him in carrying the wood of the cross. As the bier, touched by the hand of Christ, became as it were a vessel which conducted this youth to the haven of health, so likewise the cross that God imposes on us is to be the ship that shall conduct us to the port of glory. God holds out His

Hand to thee each time that He sends thee a cross. Observe that it is a gift from Him, that thou mayst bear it after Him, and prize it as His gift. Behold how willingly and with what alacrity the Saviour bears His cross, and do thou carry thine with the like disposition, for God purposes by its means to bestow life on thee. Submit thyself to His will, and render Him thanks for it; suffer, murmur not, but bear thy cross, and it will become the vessel that shall conduct thee to the haven of salvation.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ purchased His own Resurrection by means of His cross. See how willingly He extended His hands and feet to the nails, with what joy He endured the blows of the hammer, with what patience He suffered contumely, and with what equanimity He accepted death, wherein He found life for Himself and for all mankind. Contemplate the benefits that the world has derived from His cross, and thou wilt find that all the graces men have received or will ever receive come to them by its means. Oh, holy and blessed cross, who didst bring salvation and life to the world! who can venerate, who can praise thee worthily? Consider, then, how great is the debt thou hast contracted, and how bound thou art to imitate thy Saviour. Render Him many thanks for having redeemed thee by His cross, and offer thyself to die thereon with Him as willingly as He dies on the cross for thee.

Fourth Point.—Consider the delight of that mother and of all the people at the resurrection of her son; with what exclamations of joy and congratulation he was welcomed, and how they gave praise to God and to the Redeemer; and do thou also unite with them to praise Him a thousand times. Contemplate in this joy that which is experienced by those who through the wood of the cross reach the port of resurrection and the life of glory. Behold how the Church triumphant, as a loving mother, receives a fresh increase of delight at the resurrection of each son, whilst he begins to enjoy his new

and glorious life in the society of God and of His Saints. Oh, what delight does the soul then experience on account of past toils, and what joy through the cross, on which, as on a ship, it journeyed to this haven of glory! Think over this, remembering the glory of Christ's Resurrection, and take courage from His example to carry thy cross with joy, and to travel in His company with the hope of enjoying the glory of His Resurrection for ever in His kingdom.

FORTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE LOVE AND PROTECTION THAT OUR BLESSED LADY
EXTENDS TO HER CHILDREN.

First Point.—Consider in this loving mother of the deceased youth a type of the most Holy Virgin Mother, who is the Mother of all the children of the Church, whom she loves most tenderly, as her own children regenerated by Christ in the baptism of His Blood. Behold what tender love the widow of the Gospel bore towards her son, and acknowledge that the Blessed Virgin bears towards all her children, and towards thee in particular, a love incomparably greater. Consider what return of love thou dost owe her, and how bound thou art to serve her; prostrate thyself at her feet, and with repeated expressions of gratitude offer thyself to be her slave.

Second Point.—Ponder the tears and grief of the widow at the death of her son, and consider that the Blessed Virgin experiences even more acute sorrow from the spiritual death of any one of her sons, inasmuch as her love is more tender, and the loss of the soul is more grievous than the death of the body. Although she is now in heaven, where her state of glory precludes suffering, yet has this Blessed Mother sometimes exhibited this sorrow,

appearing in tears, as I can myself testify, and with great demonstrations of sorrow, in order to move her devout children to grief and to tears of contrition, and to excite them to the practice of penance. Consider whether thou hast given or dost now give the Blessed Virgin cause for sorrow and weeping by thy sins, and do penance for them, arising to a life of grace in order to change her lamentations into rejoicings. Weep the many children of the Church and of Mary who are dead through sin, and entreat the Lord with great fervour and perseverance to restore them to life.

Third Point.—Consider that if Christ was moved to mercy by the tears of this widow, and restored her son to life, He will be far more easily moved to give us life and grace by the intercession and prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom He loves as His own Mother, and to whom it must be impossible for Him to refuse anything she solicits. Beseech her to pray for thee and for all; confide in her intercession; cease not to invoke her; beg her to regard thee as her child, even though thou deserve it not, and to obtain for thee of the Lord thy resurrection from death to life.

Fourth Point.—Consider the joy of this good widow at the resurrection of her son, whom Christ found dead and restored to her alive, and recognise therein the joy of the Blessed Virgin at the resurrection of each of her sons who returns from the death of sin to the life of grace and to the friendship of Jesus Christ. If the angels of heaven so greatly rejoice over the conversion of a sinner because of the love they bear us, how much greater must not be the joy of the Blessed Virgin; for her love far exceeds that of the angels, and she most ardently longs for the welfare of those whom she regards as her children. Oh, most Holy Virgin! oh, most Loving Mother! oh, most Merciful Lady! should we fall into the death of sin, do thou intercede for us to thy most Blessed Son, in order that He may withdraw us thence and restore us to life. I ask thee not to weep, as the mother of this youth did, but to

implore thy Son to pardon our offences and to give us His holy grace wherewith to recover life; and I purpose ~~in~~ what remains to me of life never again to occasion thee sorrow, but only joy and delight. Lend me thy hand, I beseech thee, in order that I may accomplish what I here promise, and may serve thee most faithfully all the days of my life.

FORTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

For the Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

ON THE GOSPEL—(LUKE XIV.)

This Gospel narrates how Christ, while a guest in the house of a Pharisee, healed a dropsical man who presented himself before Him. He also refuted by wise arguments the calumnies of His enemies, and wound up by exhorting them to take the last places at table when invited as guests, so as to be given the first seats with honour, and not sent down lower with confusion. "Because every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

First Point.—Consider the extreme benevolence of Christ our Redeemer, whom the Pharisees invited in order to see whether they could ensnare Him into some injudicious word or action, and He went to their feasts for the purpose of saving their souls, and in order to distribute to them the bread of heaven, as He did on this occasion. Praise and extol His bounty; see how by patience and longanimity he overcame the perfidy of the Pharisees; learn to be meek and humble of heart in order to overcome by fortitude the calumnies and persecutions of thine enemies; and implore His grace to execute and fulfil what He teaches thee.

Second Point.—Consider how attentive the Pharisees were in observing the words and actions of the Saviour for the purpose of calumniating Him, and blush to see

how careless thou art in considering and contemplating them for thy salvation. Raise thine eyes to heaven, and behold with what attention the angels gaze on Him, in order to praise, bless, and thank Him for all His words and actions, and learn to contemplate them with extreme attention and reverence, in order to bless Him and to imitate Him. Note the modesty and gravity of Christ's demeanour, the moderation of His speech, and how no undue word falls from His lips. Observe and consider His temperance in eating and drinking; how, whilst partaking of earthly bread, He distributes heavenly food; and entreat Him to bestow some share thereof on thee, in order that thou mayst be a partaker of His banquet for the profit of thy soul.

Third Point.—Consider how the poor dropsical man presented himself to Christ, exposing to Him his infirmity, imploring His aid, and how he obtained relief from his suffering. Learn, O sinner! to seek the Physician of thy soul, to present thyself before His throne, to disclose to Him thy wounds, and to implore health in humility and silence, confident that He will in pity regard thee and bestow it. See that, if thou hast not already obtained it, the cause has been that thou hast not sought for it, nor manifested the wounds of thy conscience. Seek it then, with this man afflicted with dropsy, and Christ will heal thee as He did him.

Fourth Point.—Contemplate the compassion with which Christ held out His hand and took that of the sick man, at the same time restoring him to health, and derive two lessons from this meditation. First, to hold out thy hand to the poor and the sick, showing pity and mercy towards them, compassionating them, bestowing alms on them, and healing their infirmities, as Christ extended His hand and cured this sick man. Secondly, to humbly implore the Lord to extend His hand, and to heal thee of all the infirmities of thy soul, to remedy all thine ills, and to hold thee by the hand, that thou mayst not fall into them for the future.

*FORTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.**For the Monday.*

ON THE BANQUET GIVEN TO CHRIST AND THE CALUMNIES OF THE PHARISEES.

First Point.—Consider the danger of banquets, since even Christ found enemies thereat. Ponder the dangers which threaten the soul at such times, of gluttony, intemperance, disorder, luxury, murmurings, calumnies, quarrels, strife, and sickness; for all these fruits are commonly gathered at banquets, and there have not been wanting persons, and those not a few, who have met their death at table. The people of Israel,¹ we are told, sat down to eat, and they arose to worship idols. Few and rare are those who come away as they entered; wherefore it is well to avoid banquets, and so escape the occasions of injury to body and soul that they afford. Draw hence a firm purpose of avoiding such entertainments as far as thou art able.

Second Point.—Consider how the Pharisees watched Christ when He eat, observing Him closely in order to accuse Him. See how thou art watched, and live cautiously, for on all sides thou hast enemies. Consider that if Christ was subjected to this opposition, it is not strange that thou shouldst have to endure it; learn patience from His example and triumph by long-suffering and good works, even as Christ gave the bread of life to those who calumniated Him, and offered His own blood for those who sought to spill it.

Third Point.—Consider the malice of the Pharisees, who, taking no heed of the many and heroic virtues manifested by Christ, set their whole minds to discover some fault of which to accuse Him. Place thy hand on thy breast, and consider whether thou art touched with

¹ Exod. xxxii.

this leprosy, and whether thou hast fallen into this most pharisaical sin, observing the shortcomings of thy neighbours without regard to their virtues, seeking the dung-heap like the beetle, instead of settling on the flowers like the bee, having no eyes or tongue wherewith to see and praise what is good, but only to note and publish that which is unworthy. Oh, vice of the Pharisee, which the Lord Himself forgave not! implore Him not to suffer thee to fall into it, but to lend thee His hand, that as His true disciple thou mayst always pass over in silence what is evil, and publish to all what is praiseworthy in thy brethren. Grant me this grace, O Lord, that I may have no eyes to see, no ears to hear, no voice to utter, no understanding to comprehend ought but what is good and praiseworthy in my neighbours, that I may regard their interests as my own, loving them with all my heart and as myself.

Fourth Point.—Consider the opposition this dropsical man encountered in seeking health, and how Christ overcame it all; and be not disheartened by that which men set in the way of thy soul's health, but trust in the Lord, He will give thee grace and bring thee victoriously through all difficulties as He did this sick man. The devil is always at hand to oppose our welfare, but if thou hast Christ for thy protector, he can do nothing against thee. Implore His assistance against the enemies who wage war against thy soul's salvation and seek to hinder its advancement. Strive manfully; Christ will be at thy side; He will aid thee, bring thee triumphantly through it all, and crown thee with His own hand in eternal glory.

FORTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE LESSON OF HUMILITY TAUGHT BY CHRIST AT THIS
BANQUET.

First Point.—Consider how Christ read the hearts of the Pharisees who had invited Him, and penetrating their malice, born of pride, applied to them the salutary remedy of His doctrine. And because they accused Him of healing the sick on the Sabbath-day, the first thing He taught them was to perform good works on the Sabbath, which is dedicated to the service of God, who is honoured and served thereby. Observe what He says to them, that if an animal fall into a pit on the Sabbath-day it is not suffered to perish, and that the health of man is deserving of much greater solicitude than the welfare of animals.

Note these words, and consider how often thou hast esteemed thy soul less than an animal, for when it has fallen into the profound pit of sin, thou hast taken no care to withdraw it thence. Deplore thy carelessness, and beseech God not to suffer thee to be precipitated into vice, but to raise thee from the depths of thy waywardness, sins, and backslidings. Ponder, moreover, how an animal that has fallen into a pit cannot escape therefrom unless some one draws him out, and recognise thy impotence and weakness, who hast not strength to arise from sin unless God raise thee out of it by His grace. Implore Him to assist thee to escape, and never again to fall into sin.

Second Point.—Consider how this dropsical man is the type of a proud soul, swollen with presumption, obnoxious by the odour of his vices, his limbs crippled for good works, despised by all, and esteemed by himself alone. For him no place can be found anywhere, and he raises

disputes and discord wherever he goes by his anxiety for distinction ; to which infirmity Christ applies the salutary salve of His lesson of humility. See thyself in this sick man as in a mirror ; consider therein the pride of thy heart, thy presumption and vanity, and the need thou hast of the teaching of Christ, and of the practice of humility. Contemplate the humility of Christ, and learn of thy Master to be meek and humble of heart.

Third Point.—Consider the advice of Christ, who tells us to choose the lowest seat at table, in order that we may be raised to a higher place with honour, and not sent down with shame from the more exalted to the lower. Ponder how for the very purpose of being honoured humility is a means ; everybody respects the humble, whilst the proud are despised by all ; and if men so esteem them, how much more will God do so ? Ponder likewise the vanity of the world, which values one place more than another, regards one as exalted and another as lowly. Observe what strife and contentions are thereby occasioned, and all for a mere bubble and supreme vanity. Raise thine eyes to heaven, and behold that no such appreciation or strife of place exists there, neither is the more exalted esteemed above the less, or the first preferred before the last, nor is anything prized except virtue alone and the merit thereby acquired. Derive hence light to undeceive thyself and to despise all worldly points of honour, esteeming only virtue and sanctity, which alone have value in the sight of God and of His Saints.

Fourth Point.—Lay stress on the consideration of the last words of our Redeemer, "Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Not only here below, God so ordaining, but much more so in heaven amongst the Saints and angels on their thrones of glory. Contemplate the exalted honour and dignity that God has prepared in His court for the humble ; gaze on that which is enjoyed by the Seraphic Father, St. Francis, and on other eminently

humble Saints. Behold, on the other hand, the confusion and shame that the proud will suffer when they see others exalted and themselves cast down and abased to the very depths of the abyss. Be not so blind as to contradict by thy conduct the words and counsels of the Saviour, forfeiting thus the supreme greatness of the throne of glory, and enduring eternal confusion for the sake of an exalted position and of playing a distinguished part in the farce of this world. Take thy Saviour's advice, and humble thyself here to the last place, in order that thou be raised to the most exalted one above.

FORTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE GOSPEL FOR THE FIRST OF THE AUTUMNAL
EMBER DAYS.

The Evangelist narrates a miracle wrought by Christ in expelling from a youth, at the solicitation of his father, a deaf and dumb devil, whom the disciples had been unable to cast out, and relates what Christ said concerning this circumstance.

First Point.—Contemplate in this possessed youth the ravage wrought by sin when it takes possession of a soul, and compare its effects with those produced in his body. This youth was deprived of the use of his ears and of his tongue, dragged about, torn, and violently precipitated sometimes into the water, at others into the fire: such is the tyranny of the devil. Similar effects are produced in the souls of those over whom he acquires dominion by sin; they are continually tortured in their consciences, precipitated from one vice into another, always dragged hurriedly onwards, sad and dejected, until at last they are cast into the abyss of hell. Implore God with the Apostle not to permit this tyrant to reign over thee; submit not to his sway, suffer him not to find

entrance into thy soul : put on the armour of God : He will defend thee against the power and tyranny of the evil one, and give thee strength to hold him captive beneath thy feet.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ, when this youth was brought to Him, inquired of the father how long he had been in this condition, who answered, “From his infancy.” Ponder that Christ did not ask this question because He was ignorant of the fact, but in order that we should know and be warned that vices are more difficult to overcome in proportion to the length of time that they have held dominion in the soul. Derive hence the resolution of waging war against them from the first, never postponing the strife ; to purify thy soul if thou shouldst fall into sin, and to pluck out promptly any evil growth of imperfection or failing, however insignificant it be, lest with time it grow and become more difficult to eradicate.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ commanded the devil authoritatively to leave the boy, saying, “Deaf and dumb spirit, I command thee go out of him, and enter not any more into him ;” and the devil forthwith obeyed. His voice, left the boy, and never returned to torment him again : wherein thou hast two things to ponder. First, how the devil obeyed the voice of Christ, whilst thou refusest obedience and art rebellious to His commands. Consider how many things He has commanded thee, and how few of them thou hast performed ; how often by the voice of His preachers and of thy Confessor has He urged thee to withdraw from sin and from the occasions thereof, and to enter the path of virtue, and thou hast not obeyed. Bewail thy indocility, which in this respect would seem to exceed that of the devil ; for he obeyed at the first word, though unwillingly, and thou after such repeated commands canst not make up thy mind to obey as thou shouldst, and to submit thyself to God’s will. Ponder, secondly, how Christ commanded the devil to go out and to return no more. Because to

arise only to fall back again is to advance not at all; neither does it avail to cleanse oneself only to be soiled anew, or to cast off the bondage of the devil only to resume his chains. Reflect on thyself, O sinner! take heed, and return no more to the bonds thou hast forsaken, nor to the peril from which thou hast escaped; abandon sin and return to it no more. Christ commands thee; and since the devil obeys His voice, do thou also obey thy Lord.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the disciples of the Lord were unable to eject this devil, and when they questioned their Master on the cause thereof, He replied, "This kind can go out by nothing but by prayer and fasting." Such is the salve that removes the venom of this poisonous viper. By these arms is the enemy overcome; and they who, on the contrary, give themselves up to repose and feasting provide him with weapons against themselves. Thou wagest war against Satan, and a war so lengthy that it endures thy whole lifetime. On victory depends nothing less than eternal life. In order to overcome and subdue him, it is necessary that thou shouldst arm thyself with prayer and fasting. If thou employ these weapons thou wilt triumph; if not, thou wilt be vanquished. If the Apostles had need of them, how canst thou hope to prevail whilst abandoning thyself to recreation and enjoyment? Consider how many possessed souls and sinners thou wouldst have delivered from the captivity of Satan hadst thou made use of prayer and fasting, and because thou were not so armed thou didst fail. Resolve, therefore, in the presence of thy God, to mortify thyself with fasting and penance, to macerate thy flesh, to deny thyself the satisfaction of thy appetites, to watch and pray long hours in the silence of the night, and God will grant thee the victory through the merits of Christ.

*FORTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.**For the Thursday.*

ON THE POWER OF THE EUCHARIST FOR CASTING OUT
DEVILS AND PRESERVING THE SOUL FROM SIN.

First Point.—Consider how the father of this youth brought him to Christ in order that He should cast out the devil, moved by his experience of the Saviour's power in casting out devils; and perceive the virtue which our Lord in the Blessed Eucharist exercises in overcoming and ejecting the devil and delivering souls from his tyranny. Ponder how the disciples, having been unable to expel this devil, Christ commanded the youth to be brought to Him. Consider His words as addressed to thee, and bring thy soul to the Lord. Approach with this sentiment to receive His Sacred Body, saying: Lord, to Thee I bring my soul, which the devil persecutes from its infancy; at times he makes it deaf that it shall not hear Thy voice, at others dumb in order that it may not proclaim Thy praises; again he tears and drags it along as though perforce towards vice, at times he casts it into the waters of sin, at others into the fire of sinful concupiscence. Have compassion on me as Thou wert moved to pity this youth, and deliver me from the tyranny of the devil and from sin.

Second Point.—Consider how St. Mark tells us that when this youth came into the presence of Christ, and was brought face to face with Him, the devil trembled, and cast himself on the ground as though giving himself up as vanquished. O Lord! praised be Thy virtue, at Who's very sight hell trembles and the devil is overcome. Learn hence what power this most Divine Lord must exercise when He is received in the Holy Eucharist; for if the sight of Him conquers the devil, how much more will not His presence, company, and contact overcome

him in those who unite themselves so intimately with the Divinity? Prepare thyself as perfectly as thou canst to receive Christ, arming thyself with this powerful shield against the attacks and wiles of the common enemy.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ interrogated the father as to what faith he had in His Divinity; for the presence of this Divine Lord in the Sacrament is a mystery of faith, and it is necessary to quicken our faith thereof in order to receive Him worthily, and with Him the grace that He communicates. Before approaching the Sacred Table take time to meditate What is contained in this Heavenly Food, and What it is that thou art about to receive, Who the Lord is Who is coming into thy poor abode, His Divinity, His Immensity, His Omnipotence, His Wisdom, His Majesty, and the reverence with which He is adored and served by the sublime spirits of His heavenly court. Consider also what graces He communicates to those who receive Him worthily; how He is the Antidote against the venom of sin; that it is He Who overcame death and hell, and before Whom the devils tremble. Entreat Him to prepare thee becomingly for His worthy reception and to enliven thy faith. Beseech Him with the father of this young man to help thy unbelief, and confide in His clemency that He will grant health to thee as He did to the possessed youth.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the devil being cast out, the lad remained as one dead, retaining none of the operations of his senses or power of action that he had before, and Christ, taking him by the hand, raised him up and restored him as it were from death to life, and he began a new life, different from that which he had formerly led. All of which should teach thee the power of this Divine Sacrament and the effects it produces in those who receive it worthily. Its power is manifested in that exhibited by Christ in taking the youth by the hand and raising him to life; and if by His mere touch He restored perfect health, what will be the effect of receiving Him intimately within thy breast and into

thine innermost heart? This is the Bread of Life, which gives life to all who worthily receive it, and, as the Apostle affirms, many are sick and dead because they fail to receive it. Derive hence a great devotion to the frequent reception of this Sacrament, endeavouring to prepare thyself to approach it daily if thou be permitted to do so. Behold the effects of the Sacrament in those produced on this youth by the presence of Christ. He was delivered from the tyranny of the devil, as has been said, and when Satan went out from him he remained as one dead, without the use of his senses. Thus does this Heavenly Food mortify those who receive it, giving them grace to die to the world and to restrain their senses. Christ raised up the youth, and he began a new life. Thus does the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament raise up the souls of those who receive Him worthily from earthly affections to heavenly ones, and cause them to change their manner of life. O sweetest Lord! would that I could receive Thee worthily, were it but once! Blessed and praised and glorified be Thou for ever and ever! Amen. I beseech Thee, Lord, to enliven my faith, to purify my soul, to raise my spirit above earthly affections, to enflame it with heavenly desires, and, since Thou communicatest life, to bestow on me a new vitality in order that I may begin from to-day to serve Thee with Thine own being and spirit.

FORTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE GOSPEL FOR THE FRIDAY IN EMBER WEEK.

This Gospel is taken from the seventh chapter of St. Luke, and narrates the conversion of St. Mary Magdalen, who, whilst Christ was at table in the house of a Pharisee, came and cast herself at His feet, watering them with her

tears, and wiping them with her hair, whereat the Pharisee murmured; but the Saviour defended her, sent her away in peace, and forgave her her sins.

First Point.—Consider the first step taken by St. Mary Magdalen towards her conversion, which, as St. Ambrose and St. Gregory (meditating on this Gospel) say, was to become aware of her sins and of the hideous condition of her soul. This moved her to seek a remedy for her cure, which she would never have sought had she not seen and recognised her need thereof. This step thou must also take towards thy conversion in company with this holy sinner, opening the eyes of thy soul to contemplate thy sins and the deformity of which they are the cause. Behold how many sins thou hast committed in all the course of thy life, and what need thou hast of a remedy; seek the Heavenly Physician, Christ our Lord, with St. Mary Magdalen, and cast thyself with her at His feet, beseeching Him to heal the wounds of thy soul.

Second Point.—Contemplate St. Mary Magdalen at the feet of Christ, clothed in sackcloth, girded with a rope, weeping for her sins most bitterly, confessing them in as many words as are the tears that flow from her eyes. See her kiss His feet with her lips, anoint them with precious ointment, and wipe them with her hair, her heart the while being so enflamed with the fire of divine love that Christ Himself said she had loved Him much, and therefore He forgave her many sins. Oh, what a mirror of penance thou hast here on which to reflect if thou wouldst obtain the pardon of thy sins! Imitate this holy penitent in her sorrow and contrition for sin, in her tears and sobs, in her humility, confessing thy sins at the feet of the Redeemer and of those who occupy His place; in her tender love for God, and in dedicating to His service thy senses and all those things which thou hast employed in offending Him. Place thyself at the foot of the crucifix, and beseech Christ to grant thee such contrition, sorrow, and love as He bestowed on St. Mary Magdalen; and beg of her to intercede with Him, in

order that, accompanying her in her penance, thou mayst deserve to be associated with her in the pardon and grace she obtained of the Lord.

Third Point.—Consider that as soon as St. Mary Magdalen began to serve God, the devil commenced at the same time to wage war against her by means of the Pharisee, who spoke ill of her and of Christ, Who admitted her to His favour, styling Him a false prophet and her a sinner. See how St. Mary Magdalen held her peace, and continued to do penance, and how Christ took up her defence. Wherein thou hast much to venerate and to learn. Be convinced that the devil always takes up arms against the servants of God, and that on embracing the cause of God thou wilt have to encounter opposition and contradiction; but do not therefore be discouraged; turn not back, but continue thy route, for God will defend thee, as He defended St. Mary Magdalen. O Lord! under so kind a Captain, and with so powerful a Protector, I will not fear though the whole world arm itself against me. Be Thou at my side, defend and strengthen me; I offer to forfeit my life a thousand times rather than to abandon Thee, or retreat a single step from Thy holy service.

Fourth Point.—Consider the favours bestowed by God on this Saint; how, besides defending her and shielding her honour, as mentioned above, He turned His Face towards her, and gazed on her with eyes of compassion. Behold how He comforted her, accepted her tears and repentance, honoured her publicly, forgave all her sins, praised the love of her heart, and sent her away in peace—in peace with God, in peace with herself, in peace with men and with all her enemies, shielding and protecting her so that no one should disquiet her. Contemplate, on the one hand, the reward that God bestows on penitent sinners, what honour and favours He confers on them; and, on the other, behold the consolation and tranquillity of soul experienced by St. Mary Magdalen; with what joy she returned home after unburthening herself of the

weight of her sins ; what flames of love for Christ burnt within her heart ; what fervent desires of serving Him ; and how different were the dispositions of her soul from when as of old she followed the impulse of her sensual desires. Oh, blessed repentance, which deserved such a reward ! oh, well-directed steps, that sought and found Christ ! oh, most precious tears, that were so potent and effectual ! O Lord ! give me a spark of that sacred fire of love which Thou didst communicate to St. Mary Magdalen, in order that I may know how to love Thee, to weep my sins, and to begin to serve Thee. Turn Thine eyes on me as Thou didst on her, defend me as Thou didst defend her, and give peace to my soul, that I may be at peace with Thee, with all the world, and with myself, persevering always in Thy service.

FORTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

For Ember Saturday.

ON THE GOSPEL FOR THE DAY—(LUKE XIII.)

This Gospel contains a similitude or parable that Christ spoke to the multitude concerning a fig-tree which a man had planted in his vineyard, and which he ordered to be cut down, because for three years it had produced no fruit ; but being besought by the dresser of the vineyard, he suffered it to remain one year more, to be dug round and manured. Whilst thus instructing the people, Christ healed a woman who for eighteen years had been bowed down with infirmity.

First Point.—Consider that we are all plants set by the hands of Christ in the garden of His Church, and that from time to time, like the master of the vineyard above mentioned, He comes to seek for fruit, to take account of our manner of life, and of what results of good works we yield. Ponder how many years thou hast been

in the Church of Christ, what fruit thou hast brought forth therein, and what will become of thee when God comes to seek it. If the owner of the vineyard ordered that fig-tree to be cut down because it had not yielded fruit for three years, what sentence will Christ pronounce against thee, who in so many years hast performed no good works, and produced nothing but thorns and brambles of vices and sins? If the barren fig-tree was condemned to the fire because it was barren, what will become of the thorny bush, and that which yields only injurious and poisonous fruit by the scandal of an evil life? Grieve in the presence of God, and humble thyself before Him; beseech His pardon for thy sins, implore grace to amend thy life and to bring forth fruits of penance wherewith to appease His wrath.

Second Point.—Consider how the master of the vineyard was pacified by the prayer of the dresser, and executed not his threat: wherein Christ teaches us that He often times differs and even revokes the sentence He has pronounced against sinners at the prayers and intercession of His servants, and especially on account of those of the prelates, confessors, and spiritual fathers who are the dressers of His vineyard. Ponder how important it is to thee to have on thy side powerful protectors and worthy intercessors with Christ, who is the Master of the vineyard of His Church, and beseech the Saints to pray for thee, to assuage and appease His wrath which thy sins have excited. Learn also to intercede for thy neighbours, praying to God for them, and imploring Him not to let the scourge of His indignation fall upon His Church, but rather to take pity upon sinners, for God loves to be solicited, and is grieved that we petition Him not.

Third Point.—Consider how the Master of the vineyard fixed a definite space of time for the reprieve He granted, fully resolved to cut down the tree should it not yield wholesome fruit within that period. O sinner! set thyself to consider what term has been fixed for the

reprieve granted to thee ; reflect that perchance it may not extend to a year, and that God may have marked an early date ; and if thou amend not He will strike the blow which shall cut thee off from the living and precipitate thee into eternal flames. Behold how many respites God has granted thee already, and that He now finally summons thee to appear before Him at the time fixed, and He only grants thee this last delay in order that thou shouldst recover what has been lost. Reflect on this, and on the peril in which thou art, and endeavour sincerely to amend thy life.

Fourth Point.—Consider the efforts and labour of the cultivator to improve the fig-tree, that it might yield fruit, namely, he dug around it, removed the earth and manured it, throwing dung about the roots ; these things thou hast to do spiritually in order to amend thy life. Thou must remove from thy soul all attachment to sensual delights, and to the occupations and pleasures of the world, trampling under foot all its wealth, honour, and power, which St. Paul ¹ terms dung and rubbish, and of which he said that he accounted it all as loss for Christ's sake. Herein thou shouldst ponder that this manure, spread over the trees and plants, would injure them, whereas being laid at the root it fertilises them ; in like manner, if thou embrace all this rubbish of the earth, it will destroy thee and consume thy strength, rendering thee sterile of good works ; but if thou cast it beneath thy feet, despising and trampling on all that the world adores, thou wilt flourish as a well-cultivated tree, and yield fruit of holy works. Turn to Christ and beseech Him to cultivate thee as a tree planted in the garden of His Church, and watered with His precious blood, and He will give thee strength to despise the world, and to bring forth fruits meritorious of eternal bliss.

¹ Philip. iii. 28.

*FIFTIETH MEDITATION.**For the Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost.*

ON THE GOSPEL—(MATT. XXII.)

This Gospel contains a question addressed by the Pharisees to Christ as to which was the greatest commandment of the law, and His reply that it was to love God ; and likewise a question which the Saviour addressed to the Pharisees as to whose son Christ was to be, to which they answered David's, and He replied, "How then doth David in spirit call Him Lord?" and they knew not how to unravel the difficulty, neither did they from that time dare to question Him any more.

First Point.—Consider that Christ is thy Teacher, and the Ark and Depository of Truth, Whom God has given thee in order that thou shouldst learn His heavenly doctrine ; wherefore thou shouldst frequent His school, and approach Him frequently to question Him in thy doubts and to consult Him in thy difficulties, hearkening to His replies, and esteeming them, regardless of worldly men, whose teaching is deceitful and their advice misleading. Grieve over the time when thou didst consult them ; thank God for having given thee such a Master, and implore grace to hearken to Him, to learn His doctrine, and to put it into practice.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ, when questioned by the Pharisees as to which was the greatest commandment of the law, not only replied to their interrogation, but gave further information than was asked of Him, instructing them also in the love of their neighbour, and giving them light whereby to recognise their Saviour. Wherein thou shouldst ponder how great is the light shed by the Lord on all who approach Him, Who, because of His great generosity, ever bestows more than has been asked of Him. Derive hence a great confidence in the

Lord, that thou wilt obtain from Him not only what thou dost solicit, but much more, which He will bestow of His great liberality.

Third Point.—Consider the evil intention with which the Pharisees approached to interrogate Christ, not for the purpose of ascertaining His doctrine, but in order to calumniate and accuse Him if they succeeded in ensnaring Him in His speech; wherefore they went away abashed and confounded by His reply. Ponder how God knows the heart, and regards the intention more than the words, and purify thy intention in all thy works, seeking therein nought but His honour and glory and the profit of thy soul, and thou wilt find grace with the Lord.

Fourth Point.—Consider what the Saviour says of Christ, namely, that God will place all His enemies beneath His feet, which, as St. Chrysostom explains, is for His exaltation and for their salvation. Ponder how God honoured His Son, and because of His invincible patience and extreme meekness, gave Him the victory over all His adversaries, prostrating them at His feet. Learn to have patience with thine enemies, and trust in the goodness of God that He will give thee the victory over them and subdue them before thee. Ponder, likewise, what great security there is in humility, and that the lowest place in the house of God and to lie prostrate at His feet is a more exalted position than the highest the world affords, since in the latter salvation is imperilled, and in the former it is made secure at the feet of the Lord. Cry out with ardent affection of heart, imploring the Lord to give thee place at His feet, and to permit thee rather to be His footstool than to rise to the highest and most exalted throne of the universe, preferring to be the last in His house rather than the first in the world.

*FIFTY-FIRST MEDITATION.**For the Monday.*ON THE LAW OF GOD AND THE DESIRE FOR SPIRITUAL
PROGRESS.

First Point.—Consider how, on being questioned as to which was the greatest commandment, Christ replied that it was to love God, and that the whole law was contained in this precept and in that of love towards our neighbour. Ponder the sweetness of the Divine law and the mildness of its precepts, which are all love, and so easy and light that their whole weight rests on these two commandments; and yet, notwithstanding this, thou dost find God's law irksome, saying that thou canst not bear its weight. Accuse thy own cowardice and lack of courage, for want of which these duties are toilsome to thee and the fulfilment of the commandments of God difficult. Humbly implore God to give thee His holy grace, wherewith thou wilt find all things easy and light.

Second Point.—Consider how, on the one hand, the Pharisees called Christ Master, and, on the other, they believed not in Him, nor esteemed His doctrine or counsels, but rather contradicted Him, thus denying their words by their actions. Place thy hand on thy breast, O sinner! and consider how often thou hast fallen into this sin of the Pharisees, with thy lips confessing Christ for thy Master, and denying Him by thy deeds, neglecting to follow His counsels, opposing His doctrine, and doing the exact contrary of what He teaches. Pause to reflect on the gravity of the injury thou dost inflict on thyself, and of the offence offered to God. Bewail thy past blindness, and implore pardon of God, most firmly resolving to amend, and to profit in future by His counsels and doctrine.

Third Point.—Consider how the Pharisees inquired

concerning the greatest of the commandments without fulfilling the least one of them, and ponder the error of those who would proceed to higher things without being first schooled in the more elementary practices. See to what degree of perfection thou hast attained, and what obligations are incumbent upon thee. Seek to progress in the lower grades of virtue, begging of God light and grace to perform the humbler works of penance and mortification of thy passions, in order to mount up by degrees to the higher practices of the perfect love of God, of contemplation and union with Him, and to the summit of perfection.

Fourth Point.—Ponder the reply made by Christ, and take to thyself His words, namely, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy mind. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Meditate on the obligations that these two precepts impose, and see how thou dost fulfil them. Behold how lukewarm is thy love for God, and how mingled with affection for creatures; how often for their sake thou dost offend Him, and how far thou art from loving thy neighbour, when thou seest him perish without succouring him, and dost in nowise seek his interests, but always thine own. Beg of God grace to amend and to fulfil most perfectly His holy law.

FIFTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE FEAR OF GOD.

First Point.—Consider what St. John Chrysostom says, namely, that Christ cited to the Pharisees this passage of the 109th Psalm, in which David calls him Lord, and says that He will set His foot on His enemies (who were themselves), in order to restrain them by the power

of the fear of God. For even when, as in the case of these Pharisees, this fear is but servile, it yet restrains the most daring from precipitating themselves into vice. Wherefore thou shouldst endeavour to acquire it ; beseech the Lord to infuse this holy fear into thy soul and mind, in order that it may restrain thee from falling into vice, or straying a single step from the narrow path of His law.

Second Point.—Consider, in order to attain this end, the hatred that God has for sin, the rigour with which He chastises it, the chastisements He has prepared for those who offend Him. Consider how strict an account He will exact from men, how righteous is His judgment, how terrible His condemnation, how severe His justice, and how infinite the number of souls on whom it will be executed. Beg of God to engender in thy soul a holy fear of offending Him, and a great hatred of sin, in order, at least, to avoid falling into so many and such terrible evils as those with which He threatens thee, that fear may restrain thee as a servant, who art not moved by love as a son, to avoid offending Him, and to strive to serve Him.

Third Point.—Mount a step higher, and consider that the tender and perfect love of God is a filial affection born of true love and charity towards Him. This is one of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, whereby we dread to offend God, because He is Who He is, and because we love Him above all things, and would rather forfeit them all than displease Him, and would prefer to suffer all the torments of hell rather than commit the least offence against His Divine Majesty. This sort of fear belongs to the Saints and to those true servants of God who love Him, and desire to please Him with all their heart, with all their strength, and with all their mind, as Christ enjoins in this Gospel. Oh, my soul ! how happy wert thou didst thou acquire this inestimable gift of the holy and perfect fear of God ! how far wouldst thou then be from offending Him, and how greatly would it urge thee

on in His love ! Quicken within thee the fire of Divine love, for this fear is a flame thereof, and excite thy heart to greater fervour. Contemplate for this purpose the infinite goodness of God, His Immensity, His Sanctity, His Omnipotence, His Perfection, His Generosity and Majesty, and the favours and benefits He has bestowed, and continually bestows, upon thee. Behold, on the one hand, how unworthy thou art of love, and how little thou dost love God ; and on the other, how greatly He is to be feared, and tremble before Him with awe, lest thou outrage so great a Lord. Let thy heart be riven with grief at seeing that thou hast offended Him whom thou wert so bound to love, and resolve to die and to endure all imaginable torture rather than to displease, in the least thing, Him Whom thou hast so much reason to serve.

Fourth Point.—Consider thy frailty, that each day thou fallest into many sins ; that at this moment thou¹ knowest not whether thou be worthy of love or hatred, nor whether thou be in grace or disgrace with God ; moreover, as we are told in the book of Job, that scarcely can any one be found just in His sight.² If in the angels God found wickedness, and the heavens are unclean in His comparison, how shall it be with sinful men, so weak and frail, who defile themselves with iniquity at each hour of the day ? What will become of thee who hast so often offended the Divine Majesty ? Consider how many good persons have fallen away, and that some who were exalted to the heavens as the cedars of Lebanon, have descended into the abyss of hell, and burn there in its devouring flames. Humble and abase thyself beneath the dust of the earth in the Presence of thy God ; entreat Him to hold thee by the hand, beseech Him, with David, to pierce thy flesh with His holy fear as with a strong nail, to fix thee in the observance of His law, in order that thou offend Him not ; for, were He to withdraw His hand, thou wouldst fall into the abyss, without

¹ Eccles. ix.

² Job iv. and xv.

means of ever escaping therefrom, unless His strong arm withdrew thee by the power of His grace. Establish thyself firmly in His holy fear, and all things will become easy to thee, for he that fears God shrinks from nothing in His service, nothing alarms him, nothing disquiets him, and he confidently risks everything, trusting in God, Who is his hope, his strength, and his protector.

FIFTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

For the ~~Wednesday~~ Wednesday.

ON THE GIFT OF PERSEVERANCE IN THE SERVICE OF GOD.

First Point.—Consider the importance of this gift, and thence the greatness of the benefit therein bestowed ; for, as our Saviour says, on perseverance our salvation and all our felicity depend. Consider that, as St. Jerome says, the test lies not in beginning the journey, but in ending it well and happily. What profit is there in starting with a fair wind and sailing prosperously at first, if the vessel and her freight reach not the harbour? Ponder this deeply, and consider how great a favour God has conferred on those to whom He has granted perseverance in His service until they reached the port of glory ; for they can say with David,¹ “Thou hast brought forth, O Lord, my soul from hell ; Thou hast saved me from them that go down into the pit.”

Second Point.—Consider the benefits that God has bestowed on thee in order that thou shouldst persevere up to the present time. See how many are the occasions of falling from which He has delivered thee, over what temptations of the devil He has given thee to triumph, what holy inspirations thou hast received from Him. Behold how many teachers and spiritual Fathers He has sent to instruct thee how to obtain what thou needest,

¹ Ps. xxvii.

how many good friends to bear thee company and free thee from many evils, what pious examples which have moved thee to virtue, the sacraments which have nourished thee and the grace which has sustained thee. See how much thou owest to God, in what way thou canst repay the benefits He has conferred on thee till now, and how be grateful enough for this grace of perseverance wherein so many favours are contained. Beg of God to continue it to thee, and to hold thee by the hand henceforth and all thy life.

Third Point.—Consider how many persons have begun well and ended ill. Glance over the list of those who started with thee on the road to heaven, and see how many whom thou art well aware commenced with much virtue, after a while precipitated themselves into vice, and ended their life therein, forfeiting thus the crown that God had prepared for them in heaven, and which others already enjoy whilst they are in hell. See what would have been thy lot had God forsaken thee thus, for thy frailty is no less than theirs, and thy malice is greater, and thou wouldst have been more wicked than they. Acknowledge this favour to be a most signal benefit from the hand of God, and give Him many thanks for it. Humble thyself in His Presence, and recognise thyself to be the work of His Hand, and whatever good is in thee to be the effect of His Divine grace. Beseech Him, therefore, to protect thee, lest thou fall into most grievous sins.

Fourth Point.—Consider that thou mayst yet lose thyself on the road, fail in that perseverance on which thy salvation depends, and be condemned, as many have been who at one time served God better than thou dost, and who are lost because they persevered not in what they had begun. Lay stress on the consideration of what thou shouldst do in future in order to persevere; see what under currents might carry thee away, in what oceans of temptations and dangerous occasions thou mayst be engulfed, and what means thou shouldst make use of in

order not to decrease in virtue. Arm thyself with patience, prayer, and meditation with great humility, to carry thy cross in the company of the Lord until death. Offer thyself heartily to His service, and tenderly entreat of Him the grace to accompany Him always, and never to forsake Him.

FIFTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE LORD'S PRAYER—(MATT. VI., LUKE XI.)

First Point—Consider the benignity of Christ our Saviour and Master, Who not only urges us to pray by His teaching and example, but likewise composed this prayer Himself, and bequeathed it to us as a pattern to teach us how to ask of the Eternal Father those things that we need both for ourselves and for our brethren. Whence thou shouldst derive, first, Sentiments of gratitude towards this Supreme Lord for having deigned to come down from heaven and become thy Master, who art but a vile creature; secondly, A great desire of studying His doctrine, and showing thyself His true and loving disciple; thirdly, A great appreciation of this prayer, repeating it frequently with all the devotion of thy soul as it issued from His lips, Who composed it for thy profit and instruction. Ponder the value that earthly professors set on their documents, books, and teaching, the esteem thereof that they exact from their disciples, and how hurt they are to see them slighted; and consider how much more this Heavenly Master must desire that His doctrine and teaching should be valued, and how grieved He is when His disciples disregard them and value them not as they ought.

Second Point.—Consider the first words of this prayer, wherein Christ teaches us to call God our “Father,” not

only because such He really is, bestowing on us so signal and exalted a favour as to will to be our Father and to accept us for His sons, but also because He desires that we should pray to Him with the affection and confidence of children. Ponder the confidence with which a son petitions a father of whose love he is perfectly sure, how he begs of him without a shadow of doubt that he will obtain what he seeks, and how he perseveres, even though at first he succeeds not, because his trust is based on the love and benevolence of his father. Learn hence to pray with steadfast hope in God of obtaining what thou seekest. Persevere in prayer, although thou receive not at once what thou dost solicit, trusting in the love of God, Who often delays the fulfilment of our petitions in order to test our confidence and perseverance. If thou obtain not what thou seekest, take heed lest the cause be thy lack of faith and the distrust which makes thee abandon prayer.

Third Point.—Ponder a further reason why Christ commands us to call God “Father,” namely, because we owe our being to Him even more than to our earthly parent. The latter only gave us our body, whilst God bestowed both body and soul, and as a true Father He sustains us, and has by His grace made us heirs of His glory. Lay stress on the consideration of these benefits, and observe how great they are, especially this inheritance and right that He has given us to a kingdom in heaven so rich, so mighty, and so splendid. Give Him infinite thanks for these benefits, and look to thy manner of life lest thou lose by thy fault the kingdom secured to thee by His grace.

Fourth Point.—Consider that we are commanded to call God “our” in the plural, the Father of all, not thine only, because He is the universal Father of us all, without excepting one who deserves to be His Son. Thus thou art to consider all as thy brethren, and love and assist them as children of thine own father, for thou art not to pray for thyself alone, but for all with love and charity.

Ponder all these things, and consider how thou shouldst accomplish them ; lay stress on the consideration of Whose son thou art, of how thou art to render thyself worthy of such a Father, and how bear witness in all thine actions that thou art His son. The flatterers of Alexander feigned him to be the son of Jupiter, and as such he was esteemed, and was treated with profound veneration. Behold, then, how thou shouldst behave who art by grace truly a son of God, and never debase thyself to earthly vileness. O Heavenly Father ! I render Thee many thanks that Thou hast deigned to be my Father, and that I am permitted to call myself Thy son, and not only so to call myself, but truly to be such by Thy Divine grace and immense bounty. Give me grace, I beseech Thee, to testify by my works that I am Thy child, and to love and serve Thee as I ought.

FIFTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE SECOND WORDS OF THE LORD'S PRAYER,
"WHO ART IN HEAVEN."

First Point.—Consider thy Heavenly Father, infinitely Good, Wise, and Powerful, Lord and King of the heavens and the earth, and that, although by His Immensity He fills every place, yet are the heavens said to be especially His abode. First, because He has there established His court, where He manifests Himself in a more especial manner to His elect. Glance around that most vast empyreal region of heaven ; contemplate its beauty, splendency, riches, peace, and delights. Gaze on the nobility and comeliness of the multitude of its courtiers, each of whom shines like the sun, and in all of whom the Greatness and Majesty of God are more clearly manifested than in the stars and planets of the firmament.

Rejoice to possess such a Father, so rich, so great, so powerful, and such brothers at His court, which is prepared to receive all those who fear, love, and serve Him on earth.

Second Point.—Consider that God is said to be in heaven because, as the Apostle says, that is our country and home, and not on earth, where we are but passengers and pilgrims for a brief space, which flies like the wind. Our treasure is in heaven ; there are our possessions and our true wealth, for the riches of the world are false and vain ; they are only lent to us for a little while, then we must leave them, and they will be taken from us in the custom house of death. Draw hence the consequence that St. Paul indicates, namely, not to treasure up riches in this world, nor to set our hearts on earthly things, but on celestial ones, for heaven is our country, and heaven is to be our possession. Direct thy desires heavenwards ; place all thy care on acquiring that permanent wealth which ends not, which is unfailing, and which thou wilt enjoy for ever.

Third Point.—Consider that God looks down on thee from His abode in heaven, watching over thee as the eagle which soars in the heavens without lifting its eyes from its young, watching over them to defend and sustain them, visiting and sheltering them because of its love for them. Thus likewise does God in heaven keep ward over His sons, in order to assist and protect them, as witnessed by St. Stephen in the midst of his conflict ; for God attends to our wants and consolation on account of the infinite love He has for us as our Father. Contemplate the love He bears thee ; examine and see when didst thou deserve to be loved by God and to be remembered by Him, and yet how often thine enemies would have cast thee into hell had He not protected thee. Behold Him heeding all thy wants, and, like a loving Father, solicitous for thy interests and for thy welfare in everything, and cry out with affectionate gratitude, full of wonder at so many benefits, rendering

Him thanks for them a thousand times, and offering thyself heartily to His service.

Fourth Point.—Consider that God in heaven is occupied in preparing for thee the reward of thy labours, and in weaving the crown which is to be the recompense of thy victories. Take courage to fight vigorously until thou triumph, for the strife will be soon past and the reward will endure eternally. Keep thine eyes on the prize that God has prepared for thee in heaven, and entreat His assistance not to forfeit it. Consider the magnitude and worth of this reward. Behold what men undergo and endure for the sake of earthly prizes, which they fail to secure, and which, after all, are but as dreams compared with the reality of heaven, and blush to see the perils they encounter to obtain them, and how little thou dost to secure that which is everlasting.

FIFTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE WORDS "HALLOWED BE THY NAME."

First Point.—Consider that the first petition that Christ makes in this prayer is that God's name may be blessed. This is His first desire, this is what He asks and requires of us all, that we should seek with all our strength the honour of God's name, not our own, but His, procuring His honour and glory, and that He be praised for ever. Oh, my soul! consider what it is that God asks of thee, and how ill thou dost obey Him, postponing His honour to thine own, and seeking to glorify thy name rather than His. Turn over a new leaf; abandon the vanity of the world, and seek naught else in all thine actions but His only honour and glory, and the hallowing of His name. Ponder how every good son desires and seeks the exaltation of his Father's name,

wherefore God warned thee in this prayer to call Him "Father," in order that, as a dutiful son, thou shouldst exercise all possible solicitude in honouring His name. Grieve to have fulfilled thy duty so ill; beg pardon of God, and purpose amendment for the future.

Second Point.—Consider that, as St. Peter Chrysologus says,¹ the name of God is Holy and thrice holy in itself, and that we can add nothing to its sanctity. But Christ requires of us that, inasmuch as it is Holy in itself, it should be also held holy by us, that is, that we should lead such saintly lives as to induce all to praise God and extol Him a thousand times, magnifying and glorifying His name Who works such things in His elect; for, as St. Paul tells us,² God is honoured by our good actions and blasphemed by our evil deeds. Oh, my soul! place thy hand on thy breast, and consider whether thou dost praise God or blaspheme Him, whether thy works are such as to make all who witness them bless God and praise Him, and to move them to serve Him, or whether, on account of thy evil deeds, He is blasphemed, as He was by the Gentiles, who, because of the evil lives of Christians, abhorred the God they worshipped. Behold what scandals thou hast given by thy bad example, and how many souls have been led by thee into sin. Do penance for thy sins, and begin a holy life, whereby thou mayst induce all to bless God.

Third Point.—Consider that, as St. Paul tells us, all creatures bless God and worship His name—the angels in heaven, men on earth, and the devils in hell, although perforce compelled by the power of God. Everywhere is the Holy Name of God blessed and venerated, and all creatures revere, honour, and continually praise Him; and far more shouldst thou so do, whose obligation is greater. Blush to see how all creatures are beforehand with thee in hallowing the name of God, and strive earnestly to praise and bless Him more fervently than them all in future.

¹ Chrysolog. de Orat. Dom.

² Rom. ii.

Fourth Point.—Fix thy gaze especially on Christ our Lord, and consider how, during the whole course of His life, in every action and word, as in every thought and desire, in both prosperous and adverse events, He always had in view the glory of God's Holy Name,¹ and thus with all truth did He say that He had glorified His Father before men, and had never sought His own glory but that of His Heavenly Father. Oh, my soul! created for the purpose of glorifying God eternally in heaven! would that thou didst impose on thyself the task of doing now here below what thou wilt do there hereafter. Take Christ for thy Master, and learn of thy Redeemer how to glorify the name of thy God, praising Him in all things and for all things, as did holy Job. Should He send thee prosperity, raise thy voice and thy heart and say, Blessed be Thou; should adversity overtake thee say, Blessed be the name of the Lord. When God sends thee trials, bless Him heartily; when He bestows success, bless Him likewise, glorifying Him in everything according to the example set thee by Christ our Lord.

FIFTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

ON THE GOSPEL—(MATT. IX.)

The Gospel for this Sunday is taken from the ninth chapter of St. Matthew, wherein we are told that, as Christ disembarked in His own city, a man sick of the palsy was brought to Him lying in his bed, and seeing the faith of those who brought him, the Saviour restored him to health, commanding him to take up his bed and return unto his house, which he did to the great admiration and wonder of all present.

First Point.—Contemplate this man sick of the palsy,

¹ John xvii.

his hands and feet alike powerless, unable to move himself, a very picture of misery, and behold therein the weakness and misery of man, such as sin has made him, incapable of virtue or of any good work. Beg of God grace to serve Him; humble thyself before His throne; acknowledging that thou hast no strength for anything, and that all good comes to thee from His Divine Hand, from Whom thou art to expect it.

Second Point.—Consider the lively faith of those who brought the palsied man in his very bed to Christ, with firm confidence of obtaining health from His mighty Hand, as in fact they did. Accuse thy lack of faith that thou dost not obtain what thou solicitest. Address thy petitions to God with a lively faith after the example of these men, and be not dejected, nor fail to use every effort and endeavour, for God is pleased thereby, and He desires that thou shouldst ask and urge thy petition with great confidence, in order that He may grant what thou dost ask for.

Third Point.—Consider the generous benignity of the Saviour, who, as soon as they arrived and besought Him on behalf of the sick man, yielded at once to their petition, and granted health to him without hesitation or delay. Learn to be generous towards the poor and afflicted, and kind to all, hearkening to their petitions, affording prompt and liberal succour to their needs, beholding in them all Christ, Whom they represent, and healing them for His sake, as thou wouldst that He should hear and heal thee.

Fourth Point.—Consider the abundant generosity of Christ, which on this occasion was so great that the health of the body being alone solicited, He bestowed health of both body and soul, forgiving this man his sins. Extol His magnanimity, and rejoice to have so munificent a God and Lord, Who bestows a thousand-fold more than what we ask for. Place thyself before Him, represent to Him thy necessities, and confide in His bounty that He will give thee more than thou knowest how to ask for.

Dilate thy heart, and be not backward in asking of Him and supplicating Him, for His liberality exceeds thy want, and He is more eager to bestow than thou to receive. Cry out with the crowd, and say with tenderness of heart: Blessed and praised and glorified be so generous a Lord! blessed be He Who comes with such power to heal mankind!

FIFTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON SPIRITUAL INFIRMITY AND ITS REMEDY.

First Point.—In this sick man, powerless to move in his bed, and because of his weakness carried on the shoulders of four strong men, contemplate, as in a mirror, thy soul lying sick with sin on the bed of thy body, without strength or power to perform good works, or aught worthy of eternal glory, and unable even to come to Christ unless brought by the extraneous aid of Divine grace. Cry aloud from thine innermost heart, imploring God to have compassion upon thee, as He had on this sick man, and that as He came to heal the diseases of sin, He will heal thine, and restore thee to perfect health.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ, when asked for the bodily health of the palsied man by those who brought him, granted, in the first place, health to his soul, saying, "Be of good heart, son; thy sins are forgiven thee." Wherein He teaches us two things: first, to seek the health of the soul in preference to that of the body, and spiritual boons rather than temporal ones, for they are more precious and important; secondly, that the infirmities of the body have their root in the soul, and that the latter being healed, health is secured to the former; wherefore there are many sick persons who benefit not by corporal remedies, because they put not the axe to the

root, nor seek to stem the current at its source, commencing their cure by the removal of their sins, whence proceed their bodily sufferings. Apply these two lessons of the Master of Life to thyself, and if thou wouldst obtain health for thyself and for those about thee, begin by the soul, and thou wilt at the same time obtain the cure of the body. Seek, in the first place, that which is eternal and the salvation of thy soul, and God will bestow health to thy body, and both spiritual and temporal boons, as He did to the palsied man.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ conferred perfect health on this sick man by His only word, commanding him to arise healed from his bed, and forthwith he was freed from the infirmity that afflicted him. Wherein we are shown the power of God's word, not only to give health to the body, but much more so to the soul. This remedy He instituted in the Sacrament of Penance, whereby the soul is healed of all its diseases, in virtue of the words pronounced by the priest, applying to it the merits of Christ's most Precious Blood. This supreme power He has left to men in this world, in order that they may heal souls and restore them to perfect health, as was the case with this sick man. Render infinite thanks to God for so signal a mercy as He has conferred on thee and on mankind in giving to His Church so easy and mild a remedy, and one so efficacious in achieving spiritual health and restoring the life of the soul. Derive hence increased appreciation of this Sacrament, and a resolution of frequenting it, exclaiming with the crowd: Blessed be God, Who has given such power to men.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ, in healing this sick man, commanded him to take up his bed and to retire into his house. Herein He gives us another lesson and remedy for our soul's health, namely, to avoid occasions of sin, and to withdraw into the retirement of recollection, where we may find that security and those spiritual advantages which fail us elsewhere. Harken to the words of the Saviour, as though He addressed thee: "Arise,

take up thy bed, and go into thy house." Arise from the mire of vice wherein thou hast been grovelling for so many years; take up thy bed; remove the dangerous occasions that hedge thee in and deprive thee of energy for aught that is good; withdraw into recollection, and thou wilt recover the health thou hast lost in the past. This is a salutary regimen and medicament, the virtue of which has been experienced with great spiritual advantage by all those who have made use of it. Pray God to give thee strength to embrace it. Ponder that Christ commanded the sick man to burthen himself with his bed, and carry it like a cross on his shoulders, in evidence of his entire cure; for it is a manifest proof of having recovered the health of our soul when our past vices afflict us, and those carnal pleasures in which we formerly delighted have become to us irksome crosses. O Lord! grant me this grace in order that I may be perfectly restored to health, that my sins, in which I formerly reposed, may be to me a heavy burthen; that what formerly delighted may now afflict me, and that the sensual tastes and pleasures that I formerly savoured may be to me painful crosses. Grant that I may alone find delight and repose in Thy cross, in Thy love, and in labouring in thy service.

FIFTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON CONFIDENCE IN GOD AND ON THE INTERCESSION OF
THE SAINTS.

First Point.—Consider the words of this Gospel, and see how St. Matthew tells us that as soon as this palsied man was brought to Christ He was moved to heal him by the faith of those who accompanied him; and addressing him Christ said, "Be of good heart, my son; thy sins are forgiven thee;" teaching us thereby the value

that God sets on faith and confidence in His goodness, and that this is the first step we should take in order to obtain health and the favours we seek at His hand. Consider the words of Christ as addressed to thee, "Be of good heart, my son." He says "my son" in order to inspire confidence in Himself as a Father. "Be of good heart" if thou be laden with guilt, that thy sins will be forgiven. "Be of good heart" if thou be infirm, crippled, paralysed, and helpless in thy bed, like this sick man, powerless to move; for if thou have faith like him thou shalt recover perfect health. "Be of good heart, my son," if thou be neglected, poor, and needy, as was this sick man; God will protect and console thee, affording thee succour in thy necessity. "Be of good heart, my son;" if thou be persecuted, He will shelter thee, and if thou be forgotten and neglected, He will be mindful of thee, and defend thee as He did this mendicant. Derive hence a firm confidence in God, learn to address thyself to Him in thy wants, and He will always be at thy side.

Second Point.—Consider the compassion of those men who, seeing this beggar unable to approach Christ, took him in his own bed on their shoulders, and carried him to the Saviour. Oh, great charity! oh, virtue deserving of all praise, to bring the sick on our shoulders to Christ; not only those infirm in the body, but much more those whose souls are afflicted. This is true friendship and tender charity to draw sinners to God at the cost of whatever labour. Learn this lesson, and the tenderness of this love both towards God and thy neighbour, and let thine only anxiety be to draw to Christ those who, bound by the chain of their sins, are unable to approach Him, resolving to bring to Him all those whose souls are sick, in order that He may heal them, and restore them to perfect health.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ bestowed health on this man on account of the intercession and virtue of those who brought him; and ponder how powerful with God is the prayer of the just, and avail thyself of their

aid, in order that their virtue and merits may obtain for thee that which thou deservest not, and may supply for thy deficiencies. Make intercessors of the Blessed Virgin and of the Saints, and of all good and holy persons ; beg of God to favour thee on account of their merits, and not to regard thy indignity, but their faith and their virtue, and sanctity, as He was mindful of the merit of those who accompanied this sick man.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the scribes, beholding this miracle, said of Christ, “ He blasphemeth,” whilst the people were filled with awe, and glorified God. Ponder that there is no action so holy and righteous that it is not exposed to cavil ; wherefore learn of thy Redeemer not to alter thy course on account of the contradictions of men ; arm thyself with His grace, and He will be favourable to thee. Persevere in the good works thou hast undertaken, and heed not the judgments of men who term the praises of God blasphemy. Consider how Christ shielded the sick man, and re-established the honour of His Father and His own, and many of those present glorified Him for so doing ; and take courage not to heed the world, but to put thy trust in God.

SIXTIETH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE MEANS THAT DRAW US TO GOD AND SECURE
THE HEALTH OF OUR SOUL.

First Point.—Consider that as this man sick of the palsy was brought to Christ by four men, so is the sinner led to God by meditating on the four last things, namely, death, judgment, hell, heaven. These thoughts move him, and withdraw him from the mire of his sins, attracting him to God’s holy service. Avail thyself thereof to escape from thine, and to approach the Lord, and also to attract sinners, and wrest them from their vices.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ, using mercy towards this sick man, gazed on him, and forgave him his sins and the offences he had committed against Him, in order to learn how willingly thou shouldst pardon the injuries inflicted on thee by thine enemies. Derive from this example a most ardent charity for the forgiveness of injuries, and great confidence in the mercy of God; that He will pardon thy sins, however numerous and grievous they be, as He pardoned this sick man as soon as he appeared in His Presence. Place thyself in the Presence of God, and beseech Him with tears to use His clemency towards thee also, and to grant thee His grace not to return again to vice.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ healed this man on account of the faith and prayers of those who brought him, and learn to pray for thy neighbours, and to obtain health for them from the Lord, Who oftentimes, as on this occasion, waits to be besought in order to heal both body and soul. Ponder how many there are who die in their sins because they have no one to pray for them; and to how many, whose souls are sick, God would grant health, giving them true sorrow and contrition for their sins, didst thou pray and supplicate Him on their behalf with faith and perseverance. Implore the Lord therefore for the wants of His Church, for the conversion of sinners, for apostolical labourers, and for all those whom thou knowest to need assistance, and God will grant it through thy prayers.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ first healed the sick man, and then told him to return to his house; wherein He teaches us that we must first obtain the health of the soul, curing the wounds of sin by contrition and the heavenly medicine of His grace, and then set out for our home and true abode, which is heaven. Bewail the time that thou hast been detained a prisoner by thy sins, and hearken to the Voice of Christ telling thee to get up and walk. Arise from the bed of vice, arise from the tepidity wherein thou dost languish, arise from the

self-love that holds thee back, arise from earthly affections. Cast aside the bonds and chains imposed on thee by thy appetites, and walk diligently towards heaven, along the path of perfection, until thou reach the summit of Zion, where thou shalt enjoy God for ever and ever, amen.

SIXTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE SECOND PETITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER, "THY KINGDOM COME."

First Point.—Consider first that Christ is a King, and that, although Sovereign of both heaven and earth, His heavenly kingdom is the one He most prizes. It was of this kingdom, He tells us, that He came to bear witness. It was to this He referred when He "began to preach and to say, Do penance, for the kingdom of God is at hand."¹ Of this kingdom, St. Luke tells us that He spoke to His disciples during the forty days that He held intercourse with them after His resurrection; and finally it was of this kingdom that He said that it had been prepared for the just from the beginning of the world. Consider, then, Christ seated on the throne of His glory, crowned as a King, with the sceptre of dominion in His Hand, in great majesty, adored and revered by all the celestial court. Glance around that most spacious kingdom, filled with every kind of delights, wealth, honour, and grandeur that deserve to be esteemed, together with eternal glory and unfailing security. Contemplate the grandeur and beauty of that kingdom, and rejoice at the prize that awaits thee in reward of thy labours, and excite in thyself lively desires of obtaining it.

Second Point.—Consider how the kings of the earth

¹ Luke ix., Matt. iv., Acts i.

are most jealous of the possession of their kingdoms and of being the sole rulers thereof, and that none should partake in their dominion far less share their crown. But the King of heaven is so munificent and liberal that there is nothing He so much desires and seeks, as to communicate His kingdom to others, and to have many partners of His crown; and He commands us to plead for it, because of the antecedent desire He has of bestowing it. Oh blessed be such a King and Lord, and such a Father! Who seems scarcely to deem Himself King, unless His vassals and servants are associated in His glory, and crowned with Him in His kingdom! Render infinite thanks to Him for this favour; and learn not to deal parsimoniously with thy neighbour, nor to be jealous of him, seeking honour for thyself alone, without affording any participation to others, but rather share it with all, and rejoice to have many associates in thy joy.

Third Point.—Consider what thou shouldst do in order to gain this kingdom, and how wretched thou wouldst be didst thou forfeit it when the Lord Himself is desirous of bestowing it on thee. Enter into account with thyself, and see how thou hast lived until now, what works thou hast performed meritorious of the kingdom of God, and what title to it thou wilt be able to allege on the day of reckoning. Lay stress on the consideration of the importance of this business, which is the most weighty of any in which thou couldst be engaged; for if once it miscarry, there is no remedy or means of solvency, and resolve to neglect no endeavour, no effort or labour in carrying it to a successful issue. Beg of God to assist thee with His Divine Grace, and implore all the Saints to intercede for thee, and to obtain it for thee; and under their patronage take courage to strive valiantly until thou secure the crown.

Fourth Point.—Consider how God reigns in His elect by His grace, and desires so to reign in all, and in thee in particular, to the exclusion of sin, of the flesh and of its appetites. They who would reign with God in heaven

must first have Him to reign in them on earth, by accomplishing His will in all things, as the angels do in His heavenly kingdom. Beg of God, therefore, that His kingdom may come in thee and in us all now, in order that we may all deserve to reign hereafter with Him. May He now reign in thee and in us all by the fulfilment of His Holy Will in all things; leaving no place to the appetites and inclinations of the flesh. Cry aloud to Him, pray, beseech, implore, and persevere in supplication to the Lord that He may reign in thee, casting out all His enemies, and not permitting any one of them to enslave thee, so that thou mayst serve none but His Divine Majesty alone.

SIXTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE THIRD PETITION, "THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH
AS IT IS IN HEAVEN."

First Point.—Consider what Christ our Father commands us, namely, that the Will of God be done in all things on earth as it is in heaven; wherein thou hast much matter for reflection. First, what is the Will of God? It is the measure of success in every achievement, and the needle of the balance in which all things are weighed, and according to which they are directed, and whatever deviates from this rule is disorder and waste. Consider how all things were created by the Will of God, that in accordance with it the order, weight, and measure of each are regulated, by it they are preserved, and without its concurrence they could not continue to exist; and see how important it is to thee not to swerve an atom from the Will of the Most High. Implore Him over and over again, thousands of times, that His Holy Will be fulfilled, accomplished, and executed in all things and by all men

on earth, as it is fulfilled, accomplished, and executed by the angels in heaven.

Second Point.—Contemplate likewise how all created things accomplish the Will of God, fulfilling the end for which He created them, and being ever at His command and direction without any resistance whatsoever, according to the saying of David that God executed His Will in the heavens and on the earth, in the ocean and in the abyss. Gaze on them, hearken to them, the planets, the elements, the plants and all living creatures, see how they do His will and be ashamed that animals and senseless beings should obey and serve Him better than thou! Praise Him with thy whole heart for His government, direction, and will, and entreat Him to accomplish and execute it in thee much more perfectly than in all other creatures.

Third Point.—Above all, consider how the Angels and Saints in heaven do the Will of God, and lay especial stress on this point of thy meditation. Contemplate the promptitude of soul with which those dwellers in the heavenly court are prepared to obey God, at the slightest intimation of His Will and however arduous the task imposed. With what extreme rapidity and delight they execute it, without the least delay, resistance, or repugnance, or difference of opinion, but with utmost submission and joy whereby they experience continual peace and supreme bliss! Oh, that we did, all of us, obey this Lord! Such is the rule laid down for us by Christ, and such the pattern which He exhorts us to follow. Entreat God earnestly to give to thee and to all men this grace that His Will may be done in thee and in them on earth as it is in heaven, in prosperity and adversity, in difficult as well as in easy matters, in lofty things as in lowly ones, with joy and delight, with eagerness and promptitude, without delay or repugnance, desiring nothing to be or not to be but what God chooses should be or not be, with perfect union and conformity to His most Holy Will.

Fourth Point.—Consider now within thyself in the Presence of thy God what is His Will at present in thy regard. What does He require of thee, and in what He is He pleased that thou shouldst serve Him? God bestowed on thee Free Will, and He has left thee in the power of thy will in order that thou shouldst follow it and merit heaven by submitting it willingly to His. See, then, now what it is that God asks of thee, and resolve most firmly to do His Holy Will without swerving an atom therefrom. Cast thyself at His Feet, and say to Him from the depths of thy heart, My Lord and My God, my Creator and Master, I here offer myself to Thee, in order that Thy Will may be done and fulfilled in me; this do I implore and entreat of Thee, that I may not stray in the least thing from Thy good pleasure. Grant me this favour, that I may do Thy Will on earth as the Angels do in heaven.

SIXTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE SAME PETITION AND THE EVILS CAUSED BY
SELF-WILL.

First Point.—Consider that assertion of St. Austin's that self-will stocks hell and empties heaven, and thus says the Saint, destroy self-will and hell will cease to exist, for this it is that peoples it. Review carefully all those who have gone to hell, and thou wilt find that self-will carried them there by leading them away from the Will of God; contemplate the fall of the Angels, and thou wilt find that self-will precipitated them from heaven into hell; behold how many men have gone there! And in every case self-will led them thither together with their resistance to the Will of God. On this account were Judas and Ananias and Sapphira and one

of the seven first Deacons of the Church condemned, as well as all who are in hell. And on the contrary the Will of God has peopled heaven, and all who go there owe it to their having followed and executed His Will. Derive then from this meditation, a lively fear of separating thyself from the Divine Will, and a firm resolution not to follow self-will in anything. Beg of the Lord grace to do this and to work out thy salvation.

Second Point.—Consider that Christ does not tell us to beg of God to fulfil His Will in us, for did He choose to exercise all His power, no one, as St. Paul says,¹ could resist Him or oppose His Will. But what He requires of us is that it should be done in us by our co-operating with His Divine Grace, and executing His Will in whatever He desires, ordains, and commands. God assists thee and bears half the burthen, and He desires that thou shouldst help thyself and bear the other half, setting to work to do His Will with His grace. Wherein thou shouldst ponder what assistance God affords thee, how He knocks at the door of thy heart, what light He bestows in order that thou mayst know His Will, what grace to execute it, and that thou wilt not be able to say thou couldst not, or thou knowest not. "This is the Will of God, your sanctification," says St. Paul;² this is what God seeks, that we should be holy and just, and the more perfectly a man adjusts himself to the Will of God the more holy he is. Enter, then, into account with thyself and see how thou fulfillest His Will. Consider the graces and aids that God affords thee for that purpose, how thou frustratest His designs to follow thy caprice, and oftentimes despisest His Will to accomplish thine own, how frequently thou dost resist Him, and dost the very opposite of what He commands. Tremble at the account thou wilt have to render of all this, and at the risk thou runnest of being condemned; and beg His pardon, firmly resolving to amend.

Third Point.—Consider that if thou accomplish not

¹ Rom. ix.

² Thess. iv.

the Will of God in what He commands thee, neither will He fulfil thine in what thou dost solicit of Him ; whilst, on the contrary, if thou dost His Will, He will also do thine and grant thee thy petitions according as it is for thy good. This is reciprocal correspondence, and if until now thou hast not received the graces asked from the Hand of God, see whether the cause lie in thy not having done His Will in what He has commanded thee. Reflect on the Saints, and especially on their Queen, the Blessed Virgin Mary ; behold how they fulfilled the Will of God in this life ; what favours He conferred on them, extending His liberality towards them in proportion as they served Him doing His Will ; and offer thyself at His feet to do in all things and on all occasions whatever He ordains.

Fourth Point.—Consider that Christ commands us to pray for all in general, as becomes good brothers. Pause, and consider how few there are in the world who do the Will of God, and how many who do that of the devil, notwithstanding that the latter leads them to perdition, whilst the former directs to salvation. Remember what Sophronius narrates in the Spiritual Meadow of a holy old man who beheld a single devil seated idly watching a busy city, because every one there was doing his will without resistance or affording him any labour. Mourn the ruin of the world, and bewail the contempt wherewith God is therein treated, weep over the numberless souls who daily go down into hell, carried there by self-will. Beseech of God with tears to have pity on mankind, and to remedy so great an evil, to deign to send them preachers, light and strength to know and follow His Holy Will, and to hate that of the devil since it leads them to damnation. See whether thou be of the many, or of the few who accomplish the Will of God, and beg His grace for thyself in the first place, imploring the Lord to grant thee grace to do His Will on earth as it is done in heaven.

*SIXTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.**For the Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost.*

ON THE GOSPEL—(MATT. XXII.)

The Gospel for to-day is from the 22d chapter of St. Matthew, and contains a parable or similitude of the kingdom of heaven, described by Christ as being like to the nuptials prepared by a king for his son, to which those who were invited having refused to come, he commanded that the poor and the sick should be called, who came at once and the banquet table was filled. But the king, coming in to see his guests, found one who had not on a wedding garment, and he forthwith commanded him to be bound hand and foot and cast into exterior darkness, and Christ concludes saying: "For many are called but few are chosen."

First Point.—Consider that if God calls thee it is to a banquet, to a marriage feast and to joyful assemblies, for there is no joy equal to that of a good conscience, which, as the Holy Ghost says, affords a sweet and continual banquet, whilst an evil conscience, on the contrary, causes grief and endless cravings. Thus David tells us,¹ "The rich have wanted and have suffered hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good." Derive hence affections and desires of following God and obeying His call with all the fervour of thy heart, trusting that in His goodness He will give thee the consolation and joy that He communicates to those who serve Him.

Second Point.—Consider how Christ compares the kingdom of heaven to an earthly monarch, because He unites the leniency of man with the severity of the king. As Man, He is mild and ready to forgive; as King, He is severe and resolute in chastising. Contemplate what

¹ Ps. xxxiii.

is narrated in the Gospel of to-day, wherein as Man He prepared a banquet for His friends, and invited them to regale themselves ; and as King He chastised the rebellious and destroyed them with all their possessions. He feasted the poor, and condemned to the flames and to exterior darkness the man who had not on a wedding garment. Derive two lessons from this meditation : first, to love God because of His clemency, and to fear Him because of His severity ; to confide in His mercy, and to tremble at His justice ; to be ever watchful not to offend Him, and ever confident of obtaining mercy from His clemency. Secondly, to imitate Him by showing gentleness towards the good and severity towards the wicked, who derive no good from clemency ; for thou art not to be always gentle nor always severe, but to blend the two, putting forward sometimes the man and sometimes the king, and, like God, making thyself both loved and feared. Implore His grace and beg of Him to give thee light and prudence to act always aright according to thy good intention.

Third Point. — Consider how this king sent his servants to summon the guests, and as they would not come he sent a second time, and his messengers were ill-treated, although they lost not the reward of their obedience. Wherein Christ teaches thee not to tire or weary of warning thy brethren and seeking to draw them to God, even though they refuse to come, heed not thy appeals, and apparently derive no profit therefrom, for it is no small thing to uphold the cause of God and to obey His commands. Cry aloud, be instant, entreat, and persevere, as the Apostle St. Paul¹ enjoins, for God will work the effect of His Word in His own good time, and thou wilt not lose the merit of thy obedience, but rather thy reward will be the greater in heaven, according as it has been less on earth.

Fourth Point. — Contemplate this king in the midst of the banquet, reviewing and examining his guests, noting

¹ 2 Tim. iv.

of what dishes they partook, in what manner they behaved, how the servants attended on them, not omitting this solicitude for his domestics although so faithful. Learn hence the care thou shouldst bestow on the persons and employments committed to thee by God, not shifting the burthen on others, but bearing it on thine own shoulders, visiting in person the flock, whereof so strict an account will be required of thee. O Lord! grant me grace, strength, and vigilance, that I may exercise them in the things of Thy service, and in regard of those whom Thou hast entrusted to me, so that I may care for them as Thou dost for me, and as I am bound to do, sparing no anxiety or toil in the accomplishment of my duty.

SIXTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

HOW GOD CALLS US TO HIS CHURCH AND TO HIS SERVICE.

First Point.—Consider that, as St. Gregory says, in meditating on this Gospel, the marriage feast of which Christ here speaks signifies His Church, to which He invited His chosen people, and when they refused to come He called the Gentiles, who obeyed, and filled His Church and peopled the kingdom of heaven. Consider the favour that God has conferred on thee in calling thee to it and bringing thee to the knowledge of Him, instead of leaving thee in the darkness of infidelity like so many others. Give Him many thanks for this, and see how thou canst serve Him in return for so signal a favour.

Second Point.—Consider the call of the people of God, their rebelliousness in turning a deaf ear to His Voice and ill-treating His servants, and the chastisements that befell them through their crime. Behold how many times God has called thee, and how many of His inspire-

tions thou hast stifled in thy soul, feigning not to hear or understand. Beseech the Divine Majesty to pardon thee, and not to let loose His anger against thee as thou deservest, but rather to await thy repentance, and henceforth do penance for thy past sins, and offer thyself fervently to His holy service.

Third Point.—Consider how this king commanded that the poor and needy should be summoned, and the seats at his table filled by them, and they obeyed without excusing themselves, and enjoyed his banquet. Whence thou hast two lessons to learn, first, that God is not an acceptor of persons, neither does He regard the exterior appearance that shines before the eyes of the world, whether in the form of riches, or nobility, or intellect, or worldly science, but He considers only interior virtue and the accomplishment of His commandments, wherefore He preferred the poor who obeyed Him, to the rich who refused to come, because the former honoured Him better than the latter. Oh, how many of the poor and humble whom the world despises are esteemed and caressed by God on account of their virtue! and, on the other hand, how many of those whom the world reveres are despised by God for their pride, their haughtiness, and their disobedience to His voice! Learn which thou shouldst esteem, and see in which of these categories God numbers thee. The second lesson thou hast to draw from this parable is, that if thou dost not obey the call of God there are not wanting many others who will fill thy place and enjoy His banquet. Open thine eyes, and behold how many came instead of those who failed, and thou wilt perceive that they were far more numerous than those who had been at first invited. Fear henceforth to be deaf to the Voice of God, lest another receive thy crown.

Fourth Point.—Consider how those who refused to come lost the feast, and likewise the wealth and possessions on account of which they stayed away. For they who abandon God for the sake of the world lose all, and

enjoy neither God nor the world ; whereas they who obey Him, despising the world in order to serve Him, secure all good things. Cast thine eyes over the universe, and see how few there are who heed eternal interests, and how deaf earthly concerns render men to the Voice of God, Who calls them to the marriage feast of heaven. Weep for their blindness who are so shortly to forfeit all ; be not thou one of the many who follow their appetites, but of the few who yearn after eternal joys, which have no end. Harken to the Voice of God, follow His call, let not temporal affairs enchain or hamper thee, and God will grant thee both temporal and eternal boons.

SIXTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE WEDDING GARMENT.

First Point.—Consider how, whilst they were at table, the king entered the banquet hall to visit and review his guests. Whereby, as St. John Climacus affirms, is signified the judgment that Christ will make of those who have been called to His Church, and who have formed part of it, and of all who have entered His service ; for not all of these will be chosen, but those only who have united faith with charity and good works. Ponder here that there will be a day of judgment and reckoning, and that God will exact from thee and from all men a strict account of their call to His Church, and of the posts held in His service. It will not then suffice to have been a Christian, a religious, or a priest, in order to be chosen for the nuptials of heaven, if the garment of works corresponds not with the profession of life. Observe, then, what has been thy conduct until now ; see what will be thy position at that tribunal, what account thou wilt have to give of thyself, and endeavour to settle thy

reckoning now in order to have a satisfactory account to render hereafter.

Second Point.—Consider how the king fixed his eyes on one man who had entered without a wedding garment, and reproved him for it, and he was struck dumb, having no reply to offer. This nuptial garment, St. Hilary¹ tells us, is the grace of God; and St. Jerome holds it to be the faithful observance of the Divine law; St. Austin says it is humility, by which the soul seeks the glory of God, and not its own in its works; St. Gregory terms it the charity which must accompany faith in order to merit entrance into the glory of heaven; whilst Origen tells us it indicates the change of customs, casting off the garment of Adam and putting on that of Christ. Search thy breast, O sinner! and see whether thou hast set aside the habits of Adam, and clothed thyself with those of Christ. See whether sensual affections are yet alive in thee, with self-will, desire for honour, the greed of riches, ambition and sensuality, love of ease and comfort, and contempt of thy neighbour. Recognise that thou hast not on the wedding garment needful for entering heaven, and that, as St. Bernard says, it is not possible to wear both garments, one over the other; but it is absolutely necessary to strip thyself of that of the old Adam in order to put on that of Christ. Resolve, then, to abandon vice for the practice of virtue, to change thy ways, and replace ambition by humility, gluttony by fasting, anger by patience, luxuries by mortification, love of ease by the cross, and riches by poverty and the purple of the Saviour.

Third Point.—Consider the silence of this man, and that not only had he no excuse himself to offer, but also that no one interceded in his behalf. Wherein, as St. Chrysostom tells us, Christ teaches that at the tribunal of God no one will have any excuse to give for not having served Him, neither will there be any one to plead for us, and the sentence given by the mouth of the Judge will be forthwith executed without appeal. Lay stress on the

¹ Apud S. Thom. in Catena.

consideration of this circumstance, and see what fate would be thine wert thou to be as unfortunate as this man, and amongst so many just and chosen souls thou wert condemned for not having on the wedding garment. Oh, miserable being! who will answer for thee, when amongst so many no one was found to say a word in behalf of this man? He was dumb, and so wilt thou be; speak now to the Lord, and beg Him to judge thee now whilst thou hast time to improve thy account and to correct thy past errors. Entreat the Saints not to remain silent, but to plead in thy favour, and to obtain grace for thee, and a reprieve from the Lord, in order that thou mayst amend and recover thy past losses.

Fourth Point.—Consider the wording of the verdict, and its very punctual execution, for the command and its fulfilment were one and the same thing; and from the banquet table and the marriage feast the condemned man was hurried into inextinguishable fire and palpable obscurity. The king commanded that his feet and hands should be bound, and that he should be cast into exterior darkness, and forthwith this was done; for he that is condemned to hell is rendered incapable of further merits or good works. Labour now whilst thy hands are free; practise penance and charity, and heap up eternal riches, for afterwards thy hands will be tied, and thou wilt no longer have power to do so. He who profited not by the light given him was cast into darkness in punishment of his guilt, and was made to feel its absence for all eternity. Consider this misery, and make use of the light that the Lord grants thee in order to advance in His service. Labour now whilst thou hast light, before the night comes and covers thee with its obscurity. Reflect and meditate on those horrible tortures; consider what this man would not have given to have possessed the wedding garment, and to have enjoyed the banquet of which the rest partook, and make ready in time, since God grants thee the opportunity of preparing thyself and of meriting heaven.

SIXTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE ESPOUSALS OF CHRIST WITH THE CHRISTIAN SOUL.

First Point.—Consider, with Origen as quoted by St. Thomas, that the marriage of which Christ speaks in the Gospel is that which the Eternal Father prepared and celebrated between His Most Holy Son Jesus Christ and the souls of the just and thine in particular which He deigned to take for His spouse. To the celebration of these nuptials He invites all creatures in heaven and on earth, so great is His joy at the union and conformity of thy soul with His Most Holy Son. Ponder first, on this subject, who is the Bridegroom, and to whom He is united. For the Bridegroom is God, Son of the Eternal Father; and He is united to thy soul, one of His own creatures, His own work, His slave whom He created for His service; and such is His Benignity and Love that He has not hesitated to raise this base and vile slave to the most lofty and noble rank of His Spouse. Ponder the favour that a king of the earth would confer on a branded and vile slave of his household, were he to choose her for his bride, and from a slave raise her to be the queen and mistress of his kingdom, and how great should be the gratitude of such a one on whom so signal a benefit were conferred! Yet this is what God has done for thee, being born with the brand of guilt and a vile slave through sin, He has, however, chosen thy soul for His spouse, and raised it from a state of bondage to be a queen and lady and His own spouse. Behold what gratitude thou owest Him, and see how thou canst serve Him in return for so great a benefit as He has thus conferred on thee! Give Him infinite thanks, and entreat all creatures of heaven and earth to come and thank Him and supply for thy deficiency.

Second Point.—Consider how in marriage the bride is delivered over to the bridegroom, and by the bond of matrimony she contracts obligations towards him, and how likewise, in virtue of the union that Christ celebrates with thy soul, thou art to be no longer thine, but all His, without reserve of anything for thyself. Thy soul must belong to God, together with thy understanding, thy memory, thy will, thy powers, and all thine appetites, so as no longer to love, or desire, or possess, or hold aught of earth, but God alone. His must thy heart be, occupied wholly with Him, allowing no share therein to any created thing; for she is not a faithful spouse who loves another than the husband to whom she has given herself. Consider, oh, my soul! the favour that God has done thee and the obligation He has laid thee under, and how ill thou dost fulfil it. Cast thyself at the feet of Christ as a faithless and ungrateful wretch towards such exalted Majesty; beseech Him, with tears, to pardon thy past transgressions, and offer thyself to serve Him as a very slave with all thy strength and all thy heart, abandoning thyself wholly to His divine love.

Third Point.—Consider the wedding garment that God exacts for these espousals; for if He required His guests to be clad therein, how much more will He not exact it in the bride who occupies the principal place? This garment, as we have already said, is the robe of charity and the habits of the new Adam replacing those of the old Adam, in whom we all sinned. Lay stress on the consideration of the necessary change of habits and manners which must take place in one who espouses a king, and see what changes the King of Heaven requires of thee. Now that He has raised thee to the dignity of His spouse, it is no longer fitting that thou shouldst abide in the outer courts of the flesh, but in those of the spirit; nor that thou shouldst obey thy appetites and the base inclinations of sin, but good and holy inspirations which beseeem the bride of Christ.

Thy Spouse is heavenly, thus thy conversation should be of heaven, and thy desires should tend upwards, not be lowered to the vile things of earth. Oh, my soul! enter into account with thyself and see how thou shouldst live, and what manner of conduct thou shouldst assume, in order not to be displeasing to thy Heavenly Spouse; for He is as jealous as He is loving, and He will not have thee gaze on or treat with another than Himself.

Fourth Point.—Consider how the Saviour says in the Gospel, “The beeves and fatlings are killed,” all things needful are prepared, nothing is wanting: “all things are ready,” He says. Whereby, according to St. Chrysostom, He intended to affirm that, on His part, nothing is lacking in order that the soul should serve Him: for He bestows His grace and assistance for doing all that He enjoins; and we, on our part, should immolate in sacrifice to God the beasts of our passions and the birds of our thoughts and desires which fly through the air and imbibe the breath of the vanity of the age. Learn this lesson, and, since God on His part favours thee with His preventing grace and strengthens thee with His assistance in order that thou shouldst serve Him, leaving nothing undone for that end, do thou correspond on thy part, immolating for this marriage feast thy sensual appetites and all the inordinate desires of the flesh, thus giving glory to God and joy to the Angels and Saints, who celebrate thy espousals with jubilee and heavenly canticles, and will crown thee as a queen united to the King of Glory. Raise thine eyes from earth, and behold the rejoicings that take place in heaven when a soul becomes the spouse of Christ by charity, and those that thou wilt occasion if thou succeed in deserving to become the bride of God. O Lord! what have I done to deserve so great an honour? when have I merited to be even Thy slave? how far less thy spouse! A thousand thanks I render Thee for so signal a mercy; accept me for Thy slave, and give me grace to love Thee alone, and not to swerve in the least point from the accomplishment of Thy Will.

*SIXTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.**For the Thursday.*ON THE WEDDING BANQUET OF THE MOST BLESSED
SACRAMENT.

First Point.—To-day, Thursday, let us meditate on the nuptial feast that God has prepared, and on the banquet He has spread on the table of the altar in the Most Blessed Sacrament. Here, as St. John Chrysostom says, God has developed and extended the benefit He conferred on human nature by becoming man at His Incarnation, for then He espoused our nature, uniting hypostatically the Divinity with our humanity, and in this most Divine Sacrament He magnifies and increases this benefit by uniting Himself sacramentally with all who receive Him in the close bond of love. Thus Christ Himself tells us that He will abide in those who receive Him, and that they shall abide in Him, united together by the bond of love. Consider with what inexpressible tenderness Christ gives thee His most holy Body, and with what affection thou shouldst give thyself to Him in return, reserving nothing of thyself for thine own. Ponder the extent of this benefit which He bestowed, not on the Angels, nor on the Archangels, nor on any other of His creatures whatsoever, and which He yet granted to thee because of the love He bears thee. See what thanks thou shouldst render Him for this, and in what way thou canst love and serve Him, and implore His grace to fulfil thy obligation at all points.

Second Point.—Consider the banquet which is prepared for these nuptials, furnished not with the animals and birds sacrificed of old on the altar of the Temple, nor with unleavened bread such as was offered on the table of proposition, but with His own Body and Blood offered in sacrifice for thee and prepared in the form of food, in

order that thou shouldst feed on Him, regale thyself, and nourish thy soul with ineffable sweetness and profit. Ponder the inventions of His Divine Love; contemplate the excellence of this Food, the substance and suavity of this Bread, as well as its utility and powerful effects. Behold with the eyes of faith the Lord Himself, alive and glorious, giving Himself to thee, entering thy breast and uniting Himself with thee. He communicates to thee His Blood, and therewith life and grace, strength and eternal salvation, understanding and light, and all that thou canst desire. Cry aloud with admiration in contemplating the extent of His love and the stratagems of His charity, for the purpose of gaining souls and bestowing admirable favours on them and on thee in particular. Weary not of blessing and praising Him for them, and for those that He confers on thee at this Heavenly Table, giving thee in a single host that which is more precious than the heavens and the earth and all created or possible creatures.

Third Point. — Consider how, having prepared so splendid a banquet, God calls together His guests, who are the faithful, to enjoy it with the desire of communicating to them this Supreme Good. Behold the ingratitude of so great a number who excuse themselves on account of secular concerns, preferring the pleasures of the world and earthly interests to the delights and wealth that this Divine Food communicates. Oh, thankless and ungrateful men! how unworthy are ye of so great a benefit, of so exalted a mercy! and how deserving of grievous chastisement! Grant me grace, O Lord, to be one of the few who merited Thy banquet, and not of the many who forsake it for worldly pursuits. Regard thyself as the servant of the Lord whom He commanded to call the guests, and go forth into the streets and public places, into the fields and mountains, and cease not to summon all to come to these nuptials, and to enjoy this banquet which the Lord has prepared and made ready.

Fourth Point.—Consider the notice that the King of Heaven takes of those who sit down at His table, how He observes whether they have on wedding garments, which, as we said above, signify His grace and love. Ponder, also, the chastisement inflicted on him who appeared without them, who was bound hand and foot and cast into exterior darkness, and thrust directly from the banquet into hell. Consider the delight and relish with which the rest of the company enjoyed the banquet, without being disturbed by the misfortune of the banished guest, for the wicked cannot defraud the good of the fruit of the Sacred Table. He who approaches with suitable dispositions derives great advantage from this Food, which becomes most profitable to him; but he who does not so receive it, eats to himself judgment and eternal death in the Food of Life, according to the words of St. Paul. Derive hence a great dread of approaching this Sacred Table with unworthy dispositions, and a lively desire of preparing thyself to receive it as thou shouldst. Entreat the Lord to purify thy soul, to prepare it, and to cleanse thee from thy hidden stains, clothing thee in the wedding garment which adorned those who partook worthily of the feast.

SIXTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE WORDS OF CHRIST: "MANY ARE CALLED, BUT FEW ARE CHOSEN."

First Point.—Consider that, as St. Jerome says, Christ concluded His discourse with these words, because the touchstone of the spiritual life consists not so much in beginning as in ending well. This man condemned by the King for not having on a wedding garment, began well, obeying the Voice of God and coming to His ban-

quiet, not excusing himself as others had unreasonably done ; but he ended ill, because he took not the pains to fulfil his duty by coming to the table of the Lord in suitable attire. Take warning from his example not to rely on former virtue, becoming careless in God's holy service and not persevering to the end, lest it happen to thee as to this guest, and, whilst thy companions are chosen and partake of the table of the Lord, thou be rejected and precipitated into hell.

Second Point.—Consider, with St. John Chrysostom, that Christ spoke these words with reference to those who are called to the faith and chosen for heaven. Many are they who enter the Church, and few those elected to beatitude. Ponder this decree, and let thy soul be filled with awe and trembling, lest thou be one of the many ; for there are numbers of the damned who were more virtuous on earth than thou. Consider how numerous are those now in hell who have not committed half so many sins as thou hast, and God has granted to thee this mercy of awaiting thy repentance which He bestowed not on them. Render Him infinite thanks for this incomparable benefit, and entreat of Him one more grace, that of His assistance to escape from sin, and to serve Him until death, so as to secure salvation.

Third Point.—Consider, on the one hand, the infinite number of the damned, and the small number of the saved ; and, on the other, how terrible a thing it is to be condemned for ever, to enter the eternal dungeons, to be deprived of God and of His light, to suffer with the devils, without relief or cessation ; and how blessed is the lot of the predestined, who go to heaven to enjoy God without end ! Then go a step farther, and ponder that of necessity one of these two very different fates must be thine, that the risk is great of its being that of the many, and it were great good fortune should it be that of the few. Humble thyself to the very dust of the earth with fear and trembling, beseeching God to hold thee by the hand, and not to suffer thee to be of the

number of the majority, but of the few who merit to sit at His table in His kingdom. Ponder the behaviour of the Apostles, when Christ told them that one of them would betray Him ; and although the consciences of the eleven did not accuse them, they all trembled and feared, saying, "Is it I?" What, then, would they have said, and how great would have been their alarm, had they been told that many would commit that crime, since they were so distressed to learn that it was to be perpetrated by a single one? Behold, then, how much reason thou hast for fear, knowing that many will be condemned and few saved, and see how it becomes thee to always live in fear, lamenting, and ever on thy guard, lest so miserable a fate be thine ; for, were it to threaten but one only person in the world, there would still be great cause for us all to live in dread.

Fourth Point.—Consider the reasons why so many are lost and so few saved, which may all be reduced to one universal cause, namely, that the greater number of persons live ill, and the smaller number live well. There are few who are fervent and serve God after the manner of the elect, whilst the tepid and lukewarm are numerous. Many are they whom the greed of temporal things renders blind, and few those who have eyes to see and covet spiritual and eternal wealth : therefore the chosen ones are few, and the reprobate many. Bewail, then, the blindness of the world and the very considerable number of souls who go to perdition, for the sake of that which is so valueless ; for, as the Wise Man tells us, their number is infinite and unlimited. Cry aloud to the Lord to open their eyes that, seeing their peril, they may correct themselves ; beg this grace especially for thyself, and implore light to see what is lacking to thee. Beg of God one spark of Divine love, in order to despise what is earthly, and to covet what is heavenly, and great fervour wherewith to serve Him perseveringly, after the manner of His elect, so as to merit a place in their midst.

SEVENTIETH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE FOURTH PETITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER, "GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD."

First Point.—Consider, first, that Christ commands us to solicit food and sustenance for our bodies, in order that we should recognise that it comes from the Hand of God, and that it is He Who nourishes us, like a loving father solicitous for the welfare of his children, according to those words of David,¹ "All expect of Thee that Thou give them food in season ; . . . when Thou openest Thy Hand, they shall all be filled with good." Whence thou shouldst derive affections of gratitude towards the Lord who sustains thee, together with great confidence that thou wilt never want for anything, since thou hast a Father so benign, so provident, and so solicitous in caring for His children. If earthly parents consider it a dishonour that their sons should be in want, how much more will not our Heavenly Father make a point of providing His children abundantly with all that they need !

Second Point.—Consider how God commands us to ask for bread and not for other sorts of food, because bread is the aliment necessary for life, according to what Ecclesiasticus² says, "The chief thing for man's life is water and bread." Bread for food and water for drink, and the Lord wills not that we should solicit superfluities and luxuries, but only that which is necessary to our maintenance. He thus enjoins temperance, and banishes gluttony and superfluous repasts. Recall to mind that saying of St. Paul,³ "Having food and wherewith to be covered, we are content," and derive thence the resolution of being satisfied with what is absolutely needful, of overcoming gluttony and intemperance, of excluding from

¹ Ps. ciii.² Eccles. xxix.³ 1 Tim. vi. 28.

thy table varieties of viands and drinks, which serve only as incentives to luxury, and banishing from thy person the pomp of clothing which engenders pride and vanity.

Third Point.—Consider that we are commanded to say “OUR daily bread,” because what God gives thee is to be general, and for the use of all, and thou shouldst consider that it is not given for thee alone, but also for thy neighbours, and as a good brother thou shouldst share it with the needy, supporting them as far as thou canst, lest God should withdraw from thee the bread He gave, to bestow it on them. Consider what is thy conduct in this respect, and how thou dost fulfil thy duty. How wilt thou dare to beg of God to give US OUR bread if, when He grants it to thee, thou fulfil not thy petition, and, whilst asking in the name of all, thou dost appropriate it to thyself alone. If, beholding thy brother in want, thou close the doors of thy heart, taking no pity on him, how does charity abide in thee? If thou shut the door of mercy against thy neighbour, God will likewise close the door of His clemency against thee. Reflect on this in the Presence of God, and derive thence the resolution of showing mercy towards thy neighbour as far as it lies in thy power.

Fourth Point.—Consider the remainder of this petition, wherein Christ enjoins that we should ask bread for to-day only, and day by day, for which there are many reasons. First, in order that we should ever be dependent on Divine Providence, awaiting from God the necessary maintenance of life. Secondly, in order that we should excite ourselves to confidence, trusting with a lively faith that He Who furnishes us with food for to-day will do so likewise to-morrow, and that His Providence will not fail if we fail not to confide therein. Thus did Christ say in the Gospel of St. Luke,¹ “Be not solicitous what you shall eat;” thou wilt have the same Lord to-morrow that thou hast to-day, Who will nourish thee in the same manner as He does to-day. Thirdly, because

¹ Luke xii. 22

the morrow is uncertain, how dost thou know that to-morrow will dawn for thee? Each day should be to thee as if it were thy last, to live as though thou wert to die thereon; and the Lord wills that we should beg for no more than for to-day, not counting on being alive to-morrow. For this same purpose God rained manna for the Israelites in the desert day by day, and any that was kept for the following day became worm-eaten, for God desired His people to be very trustful and dependent on His Providence. Meditate these truths, and beg of God to give thee the confidence thou shouldst have in His mercy, a continual recollection of thy last end, and grace to live in conformity with His Will.

SEVENTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

For the Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost.

ON THE GOSPEL—(JOHN IV.)

The Evangelist relates the miracle wrought by Christ on the dying son of the Ruler at the prayer of the latter, who with all his household received the gift of faith in the Divinity of the Saviour.

First Point.—Consider how, by means of the infirmity of the son, God brought to His faith and to the knowledge of the truth the father, the son, and the whole family. . Ponder therein the ways of Divine Providence, and the means it makes use of for the spiritual good of souls, leading them to the service of God through grievous sicknesses and trials. Adore and worship His designs, and accept with entire submission the trials and infirmities that God may send thee, fully persuaded that He thereby prepares for thee great advantages of which thou art at present ignorant. Thus He raised Joseph to be the governor of all Egypt, by means of the persecution of his brethren, and of the many trials that he underwent. Bow

down before the Will of God, and accept the trials sent thee with all submission and humility, and as so many favours from His Hand.

Second Point.—Consider this son of the Ruler—young, rich, prosperous, noble, indulged, beloved by his parents, nursed by his relatives, and waited on by his servants, yet sick in bed with grievous fever, and at the point of death; none of these advantages, nor the attendance of the physician, being of any avail to restore him to health. Consider the frailty of human hopes, and how worthless is all that the world worships, since it was all useless to this youth, and all the happiness of this world rests on so slender a foundation. Implore of God light to know His Will, to despise all that is earthly, and to value alone that which is heavenly, eternal, and unfailing.

Third Point.—Consider how this Ruler, on learning that Christ had arrived at his city, went out to solicit health for his son. Learn to care for those who are entrusted to thee, and whom God has placed under thy guidance, seeking their spiritual health and the good of their souls with all diligence and solicitude, and pray to the Lord for them with faith even greater than that with which this Ruler besought of the Saviour the health of his son.

Fourth Point.—Consider the benignity of the Saviour, and His great power whereby He forthwith and from where He was bestowed health on the sick youth in his home. The Ruler besought Christ to come to see and heal his son, and the Lord did more than was asked, granting him health without delay, and from where He was, by His only word. Exclaim with sentiments of admiration and gratitude, extolling the immense power of the Lord, and the might of His Word, with which, as in the beginning, He gave existence to that which was not, so likewise did He renovate that which was about to be destroyed. Prostrate thyself at His Feet, and beseech Him to speak one word on thy behalf, to repair the failures of thy life, to heal thy infirmities, and to grant

to thee, as to this Ruler, the light of Faith, in order that thou shouldst serve Him henceforth as thou art bound to do.

SEVENTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE SICKNESS OF THE SON OF THE RULER, AND THE
HEALTH BESTOWED ON HIM BY CHRIST.

First Point.—Consider that this youth who lay sick was wealthy, free, and reared in abundance; for numerous repasts and luxurious living destroy health, whilst temperance and moderation preserve it. If the body is injured by excessive indulgence, far greater is the injury thereby inflicted on the soul. Wherefore thou shouldst learn from this meditation to fly gluttony and intemperance, and to practise moderation and mortification in thy food, so as to avoid what is injurious to both body and soul. Remember how our first parent, by intemperance with regard to food, drew on himself the twofold death with which God had threatened him, and implore the Lord to support thee with His Arm, lest thou perish by following in his footsteps.

Second Point.—Consider the dying condition to which this youth was brought by his dissipations, and that he was unaware of his danger until he reached the last extremity, neither did he till then seek Christ. Oh, how blindly do men pursue the dissipations of a disorderly life, and how late do they have recourse to Christ, after having sought health at all the doors of the world! Open thine eyes, and see how often thou hast fallen into this error in all thy necessities and trials, first addressing thyself to men of the world, and only turning to God at the last moment, when thou couldst find no remedy in creatures. Do penance for thy fault, cast thyself at His Feet,

begging pardon, and acknowledging that in His Hand alone are health and life; implore Him to bestow them on thee, forgiving thy past transgressions, and granting thee grace to amend for the future.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ would not go to the house of the Ruler as the latter asked Him to do in order to heal his son, whilst He of Himself offered to go to that of the Centurion to heal his servant. Wherein He affords us a great lesson not to flatter the princes of the earth, or to be moved by the splendour of greatness, but to be guided by the rule of true charity, which, like the sun, shines equally on all. Learn hence to tend the poor and helpless with the same tenderness as the rich and powerful of the age, and to deal with them always with humility and charity after the example of Christ, never suffering thyself to be overawed by the magnificence of the mighty.

Fourth Point.—Ponder the emotion with which Christ replied, saying, "Unless you see signs and wonders you believe not." Wherein He reproved the Ruler for his little faith, which did not go so far as to believe that Christ could heal his son from where He then was without going to his house, and which was so weak that he needed miracles to strengthen it. Notwithstanding which Christ cured the youth at once and without delay, His clemency being the more manifest because of the lack of faith and merit on the part of the Ruler. Blessed be Thou, O Lord! Who dost not regard our demerits, but turnest away Thine Eyes from our offences in order to use Thy mercy towards us and to do good to us. Learn hence to forget the shortcomings of thy neighbours, and not to regard their transgressions, so as to show charity towards them. Ponder also the grief that Christ experiences at our want of faith, and see that which He feels on thy account, in whom faith is well-nigh dead, and thy confidence so slack that thou dost scarcely trust in Him. Behold how often He has urged thee back to fervour in His service, and it seems as though thou didst

await miracles in order to hearken to His call. Bewail thine obduracy and rebelliousness, weep over thy resistance and perversity, and beg pardon of God for thy past errors. Entreat the Lord to open to thee the doors of His clemency, to receive thee as He did this Ruler, and to grant to thee, as He did to his son, health of soul and body.

SEVENTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON SPIRITUAL SICKNESS AND HEALTH.

First Point.—Consider in this sick and dying youth, devoured by a raging fever, unable to find relief and prostrate in his bed, a type of thine own soul, sick in the bed of thy body, burning with the ardent fever of sin, without strength or courage for any act of virtue, unable to find true relief of the Spirit, and nigh unto the eternal death of hell. Such is the state of a soul in mortal sin, wherefore take pity on thy soul, and return to the friendship of God ; contemplate what it endures, and the peril in which it lies ; reflect that it is thine own, grieve over its ills, and seek their remedy, as this Ruler did the cure of his sick child.

Second Point.—Consider that this Ruler came to seek Christ, that he pleaded with Him for the health of his son, and that, having received a rebuff, he yet blindly persisted and besought the Lord a second time, wearying not, nor desisting from his purpose, until he obtained what he sought ; and learn to seek with diligence the Physician of thy soul. Come to the Saviour, in whom salvation is ; ask, pray, insist, cry aloud, and persevere, beseeching, imploring, and trusting. Weary not until the Lord yields to thy petitions and takes pity upon thee, for He will do so if thou persevere, and thou wilt obtain

thy request if thou but know how to ask with humility and confidence.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ healed the son of this Ruler from a distance, because He was present in spirit. Thus is He present to thy soul, and He sees thy thoughts and desires and the designs thou dost form in thine innermost heart. He sees what faith and confidence are in thee, what thou hast to endure and to suffer, and the need thou hast of health. All this is present to Him, and He awaits to assist and to heal thee that thou shouldst merit it. Quicken thy faith and display thy wants to God, Whom thou hast at hand to assist thee and to bestow health upon thee. Ponder those words of the Saviour: "Go thy way, thy son liveth." He spoke, and forthwith the youth lived and was well, enjoying perfect health. Oh, Supreme Virtue! Oh, wonder working words! Oh, efficacy of the power of God! Speak one word, O Lord, that my soul may be healed; speak it from where Thou art, and my soul will here be healed, for I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my poor roof. By the sole power of Thy Will, O God, Thou canst heal me; stretch forth then the Arm of Thy clemency, and let it reach me as it did the son of this Ruler and the servant of the Centurion, and forthwith I shall be healed and saved by the greatness of Thy power.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ bestowed on this youth not only bodily health, but likewise that of the soul for himself and his father and for all that household who followed in his footsteps, wherein thou hast two things to learn. First, how powerful is good example given by those in authority, since that of this Ruler drew after him all his household, and was the cause of their salvation. Whence thou shouldst learn to give good example in thy family and to strive thereby to attract all to Christ, and not to lead them away from His service by the evil example of thy life. Secondly, learn not to be content with approaching thy God alone, but endeavour to bring likewise all others, illuminating them.

with the light that the Lord grants to thee. Offer Him thy desire of so doing, and entreat Him to teach thee and to enlighten thee, in order that thou mayest be able to bestow light on others, giving thee His grace to draw them to His holy Faith and service.

SEVENTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE PRUDENCE NECESSARY TO AVOID FALLING BACK
INTO THE MALADY OF SIN.

First Point.—Consider how the Evangelist tells us that Christ came to Capharnaum, which was the most devout and peaceful city of that region, the ordinary abode of Christ, and where He was more favourably received than elsewhere, and it was there that the son of the Ruler lay sick, for there is no city so healthy and advantageously situated as to be free from all sickness or danger to health. Likewise there is no religious house so holy, nor society so excellent, as to be faultless, and where we are free from every occasion of offending God, unless we be very cautious and wary not to fall into sin. The Angels sinned in heaven and Adam in Paradise, the Israelites in the desert whilst nourished with manna from heaven, and Judas in the school of the Apostles fed with the milk of the doctrine of Christ. O Lord, how great is our weakness! hold me by the hand that I may not be precipitated into vice and sins. What will become of me if Thou defend me not? Derive hence a great fear of falling into vice, and great vigilance in all thine actions, never esteeming thyself safe in any place however holy it be, but always mindful that thou art everywhere capable of sin.

Second Point.—Consider that, as St. John Chrysostom affirms, Christ came to Capharnaum from Cana, where

He had changed the water into wine, because that miracle was not appreciated, and His disciples alone believed in Him, wherefore He abandoned as unworthy of His teaching and miracles those who were not moved thereby. Oh, my soul ! behold how many miracles God has performed on thy behalf, and how hard thy heart has been not to believe in Him as thou shouldst, and not to give thyself unreservedly to His service. Tremble lest He abandon thee and withdraw like the sun seeking another hemisphere, and, carrying His light there, leave thee in the darkness of night. Regard not, O Lord, my incredulity and my obduracy ; neither abandon me in my sins. Grant me grace to esteem Thy wonders, to accept Thy teaching and to profit duly thereby, in order that I may deserve to be visited and succoured by Thee.

Third Point.—Consider what passed between Christ and this Ruler who, as the Venerable Bede observes, approached at first with little faith, not believing that the Lord could heal his son, unless He came to his house. Later on his faith became firmer, so that he believed the words of Christ when He told him that his son lived and was well ; and lastly, on beholding the miracle, it received such increase that he believed most firmly and “his whole house” with him. Wherein thou shouldst learn the advantages derived by those souls who treat with God, and how little by little familiarity with Him urges them on to perfection. Derive hence a firm resolution of devoting thyself to prayer and familiar intercourse with God. Be not cast down if thou experience not at once any profit in thy soul, but persevere in prayer and trust in the Lord ; He will reward thee and give thee a lively faith, and thou wilt progress in spirituality as this Ruler did who held intercourse with Him.

Fourth Point.—Consider, lastly, that Christ bestowed life because He is Life itself, and He gives it to those who follow Him. In this world He bestows the life of grace, and in the next that of glory : these are the real health and the true life that thou shouldst seek. Christ

it is Who will bestow them, for He is the true Life : embrace His Feet, like St. Mary Magdalen, and say to Him, with the spouse of the Canticles,¹ "I will hold Him, and I will not let Him go, until He introduce me into my Father's house, and into that of my Mother who bore me." O King of Heaven, Health and Life of souls ! be Thou my life, and bestow it upon me with Thy right hand. Thou Who Healest all, leave me not alone sick ; grant me the health and life of the soul, that by Thy grace I may live of Thy life in this world, and of that of Thy glory in the next for ever and ever.

SEVENTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE SUPERSUBSTANTIAL BREAD FOR WHICH WE ASK
IN THE LORD'S PRAYER.

First Point.—Consider how St. Matthew says that Christ exhorts us to petition daily for supersubstantial Bread, by which, according to many Saints whom St. Thomas quotes, is meant His own most Holy Body under the sacramental species of bread. Wherein thou shouldst meditate, first, in what manner this Divine Food is supersubstantial, namely, because alone it affords nourishment to the soul and contains within itself the substance of all other food. For this reason did Christ Himself affirm of His Flesh that it was "meat indeed," and of His Blood that it was "drink indeed," for no other food resembles this, wherein grace is conveyed to us and the very Author of grace Himself. Reflect on the value of this Food, and see what nourishment and strength it communicates to the soul. Render many thanks to God for the favour He has done us in giving it to us for our consolation and remedy, and learn to despise all other food

¹ Cant. iii.

for the sake of this one, which surpasses all others in its substance and its virtue.

Second Point.—Consider why Christ termed this Food *our bread*: namely, because, in the first place, Christ prepared it for us, and not for the Angels, to whom He granted not the favour that He conferred on us. Ponder the thanksgivings that the inhabitants of heaven would have rendered to the Lord had He conferred on them this benefit of giving them His Body as He has done to us; and be not more backward in thy gratitude and in appreciating so singular a benefit than they would have been. In the second place, this Bread is given not to one person alone, but it is a favour granted equally to all. Ponder here the impartiality with which Christ distributes so sublime a gift to all, little and great, noble and simple, rich and poor, excluding none, making no distinctions or exceptions, but communicating this grace to each one in proportion to the devotion and preparation brought by each. And oftentimes the poor and humble receive from God a larger measure of grace, if perchance they be better disposed than the rich and mighty, who may be less so. Extol the wondrous works of the Lord and the impartiality of His justice, and study to deserve a greater increase of His grace by preparing thyself better.

Third Point.—Consider that this Divine Bread, though of such exceeding value, is yet termed by Christ “*DAILY bread*,” and we are commanded to ask for it every day, even as the manna that descended daily from heaven; for, as St. Austin says, we are each day to prepare ourselves to deserve to receive It, and to purify our souls as perfectly as we can, that they may become worthy abodes of so mighty a Lord. Thus of old did God send at dawn a gentle wind to cleanse the earth on which the manna was to fall, because the soul that is to receive this Bread of heaven should be free from all imperfection. Search thine own conscience, and see whether it be so pure as to render thee worthy to receive It, and strive to purge

away all imperfection. Follow the advice of St. Austin, and so live as to deserve to communicate daily.

Fourth Point.—Consider that Christ commands us to beg for this Divine Bread, because it sustains and nourishes us as bread, and therewith we repair the losses that our sins occasion us daily; for each day we need to replace, by means of this celestial Aliment, what we daily waste by sin. Each day we excite the wrath of God against us, and each day we need to offer Him this sacrifice in atonement and satisfaction for our sins. Each day our soul suffers some detriment, and each day we require this salutary remedy wherewith to cure our ills. Contemplate, then, the wealth and inestimable riches that thou dost possess in this heavenly Particle, and learn to prize and venerate It in a becoming manner. Offer It daily to God in satisfaction for thy sins, and receive It with thanksgiving for the renovation of thy soul. Implore this Lord, since He is the heavenly Physician, to heal thee of thy infirmities, to preserve thee from fresh falls, and to grant thee perseverance in His grace.

SEVENTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE FIFTH PETITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER, "FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES."

First Point.—Consider what St. John Chrysostom meditates concerning this petition, first, that the Saviour, having instructed us to solicit our daily bread, next commands us to negotiate eternal life and the means that lead thereunto, namely, the forgiveness of sins and victory over temptations. This solicitude about eternal concerns is that which should occupy thy heart, and on which thy utmost efforts should be expended; and how is it possible to secure eternal life except by means of the

forgiveness of sins? for which reason Christ commands us to ask it of His Eternal Father. Examine, then, what it is that fills thy heart: is it solicitude for the pleasures and comforts of the body, and for temporal things or eternal boons? Endeavour to set aside the former and to seek the latter, so that they may become the principal object of thy care, the aim towards which thine actions are directed, and that in which thy greatest efforts and solicitude are employed. Be careful for this end to obtain the pardon of thy sins, and heed not the vain and perishable things of this world.

Second Point.—Consider the second reason for which Christ commands us to beg from His Eternal Father the pardon of our sins, namely, as the same St. John Chrysostom says, in order that we should be aware that this pardon must come to us from His Hand, that He uses mercy towards those who implore it, repenting of their sins, and that He only awaits that we should ask it in order to bestow it upon us. Oh, most Pitiful Lord! so prone to clemency and to pardon the offences committed against Thee that Thou dost solicit the guilty to implore pardon in order to extend mercy towards them. Derive hence affections of joy at having so Pitiful and so Generous a God, so Clement and Merciful a Master, Who solicits us with His Mercy and Forgiveness. Praise and extol His Bounty to the utmost of thy strength, and acquire likewise great confidence in His Compassion for obtaining the pardon of thy sins, howsoever many and grievous they be.

Third Point.—Consider the third reason why Christ commands us to ask each day for the forgiveness of our sins, which is in order that we should humble ourselves, and live warily knowing our weakness and malice, since we daily fall and sin many times, and stand in need of forgiveness. “A just man,” says Solomon,¹ “shall fall seven times,” that is, many times a day; how, then, shall it be with the sinner? We are all sinners and we

¹ Prov. xxiv.

all fall, wherefore Christ exhorts us all to negotiate every day with prayers and supplications our pardon from the Hand of God, Who alone can forgive sins. Reflect what would be thy fate did God refuse thee forgiveness. If all the sins that thou hast committed in thy whole life were to be collected together, think what a profound ocean would be formed of so many streams as flow in to swell it daily. Humble thyself in the Presence of God, acknowledging thyself to be a sinner, and unworthy that the earth should bear thee or the heavens cover thee, or to raise thine eyes from the ground. Marvel that creation should suffer thee to exist, and that all creatures have not turned against thee, who hast so continually offended thy Creator by so many transgressions. Beseech the Lord to remember thy frailty, and to restrain His wrath, lest He annihilate thee or precipitate thee into the abyss of hell, which thy sins have merited.

Fourth Point.—Consider the fourth reason why Christ commands us to ask daily for the forgiveness of our sins, namely, in order that we should ever bear them in mind, and weep over them with tears of true contrition, doing penance for them. This is one great object of this petition, and a most useful lesson to us. Cast thine eyes over thy past life, consider likewise thy present condition, and recall to mind how often and how grievously thou hast offended God. Ponder who the offender is, and Who the Person offended; the creature revolted against his Creator; he who has received benefits against Him Who conferred them. Thou hast offended thy Benefactor, Him whom thou wert for so many reasons bound to serve, and this not once in thy life, nor once in a year, or in a month, but many times each day, and even at every hour of the day, offending Him unceasingly. On the other hand, reflect what punishments thou hast merited by so many and such repeated transgressions, and how great is the Clemency of God, Who has borne with thee. Lament, bewail, and melt into tears of true contrition for having offended so great a God, so merciful

and generous a Father, so deserving of thy fidelity. Implore His forgiveness with all the tenderness of which thy soul is capable, and ask His grace in order henceforth to die a thousand deaths rather than to commit the slightest offence against His Divine Majesty.

SEVENTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE SECOND PART OF THE FIFTH PETITION, "AS
WE FORGIVE."

First Point.—Consider first that we ask God to forgive us on condition of our forgiving those who offend against us, and if this condition be not fulfilled we shall not obtain what we ask. Ponder, then, how important it is to thee that God should pardon thee, and what fate would be thine did He refuse His forgiveness. Consider next that God will not forgive the offences thou hast committed against Him, unless thou also forgivest those committed by thy neighbours against thee. Wherefore, prostrate at His Feet, say to Him with thy whole heart, I forgive, O Lord, most willingly all my enemies; I pardon all who have raised their hand against me, and I beseech Thee to favour them in proportion to the evil they have done me, in order that Thou mayest forgive me the offences that I have committed against Thee. I pardon them in order to secure Thy forgiveness: forgive me, Lord, my debts as I forgive my debtors.

Second Point.—Consider how God reminds us of our debts towards Him, desiring us to repay Him in the person of our neighbour, forgiving their debts on account of those that we have contracted towards God. If we do not accomplish this we shall for ever remain debtors towards His Divine Majesty, and be condemned as defaulters, to expiate our debt in eternal torments. Turn thine eyes on thyself, oh, my soul! and consider how numerous and

how grievous are the debts that thou hast contracted towards God, for they exceed in number the grains of sand on the sea shore, and, considering the dignity of Him Whom they offend, their malice cannot be exaggerated. Compare with them the injuries inflicted on thee by thy neighbours, of which thou dost complain so bitterly, and see how slight they are in comparison. See, then, how God forgives thee innumerable and enormous debts, in order that thou shouldst forgive mere trifles to thy brethren. Resolve, then, to pardon them, and render thanks to the Lord thousands of times for having offered thee forgiveness on such easy terms.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ commands us to beg of His Eternal Father to forgive us our debts, because if He does not we have no means of paying them. Wherein thou shouldst perceive thy poverty, and how impossible it is for thee to satisfy so powerful a Lord for the debts that thou hast contracted towards Him. Humble thyself in His Presence, acknowledge thy penury, and entreat the Saviour of the world for one drop of His most Precious Blood in order therewith to repay thy debts. Implore Him to redeem thy pledge, and to pay His Eternal Father for thee, since the infinite treasures of heaven are His. O Master of my soul! oh, most generous Lord! take pity on this poor and miserable creature; free me from this bondage; pay, O Lord, that which I cannot pay, and have pity upon me.

Fourth Point.—Consider lastly the degree of familiarity to which the Saviour exalts us in this petition, wherein He says that we are to beg God to imitate us in the exercise of forgiveness. The Apostle St. Paul exhorts us to imitate God, saying,¹ "Be ye therefore followers of God, as most dear children;" and Christ Himself said,² "Be you therefore perfect, as also your Heavenly Father is perfect;" but in this prayer He commands us to change places, and to entreat God to imitate us, forgiving us our debts³ "as we also forgive our debtors." Wherein thou

¹ Ephes. v.² Matt. v.³ Matt. vi.

shouldst perceive the infinite goodness of God, Who has placed in our own hands so important a matter as the forgiveness of sins, on which eternal life depends, and gives us the means of obtaining it by extending our forgiveness to our brethren. Render Him infinite thanks for this favour, arm thyself with charity towards thy neighbour, and then with entire confidence entreat God to forgive thy debts as thou dost forgive thy brethren theirs.

SEVENTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost.

ON THE GOSPEL OF THE DAY—(MATT. XVIII.).

In this Gospel Christ compares the kingdom of heaven to a King who would take an account of his servants, and one of them to whom he had forgiven ten thousand talents refused to forgive his fellow-servant one hundred which he owed; wherefore the King, being angry, commanded him to be cast into prison until he should have paid all his debt to the last farthing. In conclusion, the Saviour adds: "So also shall my Heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts."

First Point.—Consider the teaching of this Gospel, which is a confirmation, and as it were a repetition, of the previous Meditation. Christ teaches us by this parable that, at the day of judgment, God will not pardon him who in this life has refused forgiveness to his brethren. Repass in thy mind the whole history of this parable, and behold how important it is to thee to be merciful towards thy neighbour, forgiving his debts, in order that God may show mercy to thee and pardon thine. Remember that if thy neighbour has no means of repaying thee, neither hast thou wherewith to satisfy God, and

resolve to forgive others in order that God may forgive thee.

Second Point.—Consider how this mighty King began to reckon with his servants, exacting a very strict account of all that he had confided to them. Ponder slowly that the day will come on which the Supreme Emperor of heaven and earth will enter into reckoning with all His servants. Consider how minute will be the account required, and how severe God will show Himself on that day, when there will be no appeal as there was in the parable. The verdict delivered will be final and irrevocable, and it will be executed forthwith, the just entering heaven and the wicked going down into hell for ever and ever. Consider for which of these places thou art bound, and what would be thy fate were God to summons thee to render thy account now. Tremble at the judgments of God, and prepare thyself for the day of reckoning.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ says that one of the King's servants was detected in a deficit of ten thousand talents, and he had not wherewith to pay. Put thyself in the place of this servant, O sinner! and imagine thyself at the tribunal of the Great God, surrounded on all sides by accusers who lay charges against thee and reveal far worse things against thee, for thy sins are more numerous than were this man's debts. Reflect what reply thou wilt make, and how thou wilt discharge the debts thou hast contracted towards God. See how heavy will be the balance against thee, for, as holy Job affirms, thou wilt not be able to answer one accusation in a thousand. Adjust then thy accounts before thou art called upon to settle them, pass in review the record of thy life, examine the years gone by, the old as well as the fresh entries. Examine the receipts and the expenditure, the charges and discharges, and reckon up the balance with exactitude, in order that thou mayest have a faithful account to render on the day of judgment.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ tells us that when

the King became aware of the shortcoming of his servant he ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all he possessed, and payment to be made. Herein we are shown how severe will be that last judgment, and how terrible the sentence by which the wicked will be bereft of all his goods wherein he trusted and left utterly despoiled ! Ponder the affliction the sinner will experience at this juncture, and how frustrated will all his hopes be. Apply here those words of Christ, "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world, if he lose his own soul ?" Reflect on thyself, and see how, on issuing through the portals of this life, all that thou hast amassed will be confiscated, and that in the account thou wilt have to render thou wilt be unable to avail thyself of the wealth heaped up here below ; for it will all be forfeited and pass on to others : thy deeds alone will accompany thee. Wife, children, relations, friends, rents, houses, vineyards, and properties, all will remain behind : this being so, be not so unwise as was this servant, but make use of the time that God now grants thee to store up immortal riches of many good works, which shall avail thee on that day.

SEVENTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE PATIENCE AND LONGANIMITY OF GOD TOWARDS
SINNERS.

First Point.—Consider how this servant, when called to account, cast himself at the feet of his King, entreating him with tears to grant a reprieve, and he would pay all the debt. Impossible as it is to thee to pay the debts that thou hast contracted towards God, this one remedy remains, namely, to cast thyself at His Feet, entreating Him with tears of true contrition to delay the day of

reckoning, to await thy repentance, and to give thee time to satisfy for thy sins and to pay thy debts. Kneel down and say with this servant, Lord, have patience; wait for me as Thou hast waited for so many: I promise to amend and to serve Thee in such wise as by Thy grace to satisfy for my sins.

Second Point.—Consider how the King decreed the confiscation of all this servant's temporal goods, his wife and children and property, for the recovery of the debt. Wherein Christ teaches us that God withdraws from us the good things of this world, in order that we may pay what we owe Him for spiritual boons and for the purchase of heaven. The loss of relatives of whom we are bereft, that of health, honour, and property, are so many pledges that He wrests from us in order that we may open our eyes and pay the debts we owe for our sins, until He finally calls us to account and seizes our own person. Oh, my soul! take heed to thyself; see how many warnings God has given thee, and how many pledges He has wrested and daily requires from thee because of the debts thou owest and dost not pay Him. Behold the term is shortening, and very soon He will cite thee finally to His tribunal, will order thee to be sold and delivered over to the torturers until thou shalt have paid in thine own person to the very last farthing. Arouse thyself and seek no further delay, but endeavour forthwith to satisfy thy King, and to liquidate thine account.

Third Point.—Consider the benignity of the King, who needed no other mediators than the tears of his servant in order to have patience with him and to give him time. Ponder, further, that he not only granted the delay that was asked, but also forgave the whole debt, a favour so great that the servant had not ventured to solicit it. Wherein is manifested the Infinite Mercy of God towards sinners, Who not only awaits them to repentance, but likewise most generously pardons them all their offences against Him. Blessed be so Good a

God, so Generous, so Merciful and Compassionate, for ever and ever, Amen. Derive hence a great confidence in God, and resolve firmly to love and to serve Him eternally. Contemplate the patience with which God endures and awaits so many sinners as are now offending Him in the world. Think of that which He has shown and still shows in bearing with thee and in awaiting thy repentance for so many years, and thou dost never finally resolve to come and devote thyself to His service. Bewail thine obstinacy and rebelliousness, break the chains that bind thee, and let Him have no longer to await thy conversion, lest thou arouse His wrath by thy delays, and His Indignation be let loose against thee.

Fourth Point.—Ponder, lastly, how this King had allowed the day of reckoning to be delayed in order that the debt of his servant, being increased, his own generosity might be the more manifest in forgiving a larger sum. Herein we behold the liberality of God, Who awaits sinners for many years, knowing that they are heaping up offences, in order to grant a fuller pardon, and the better to manifest His mercy. Whence thou shouldst derive two lessons, first, to praise and magnify the Goodness and Mercy of God, Who deems it of minor importance to be set at naught by our offences, but glories in forgiving the more readily those who have more grievously offended Him; secondly, not to be down-hearted, however numerous thy sins may be, but rather to gather fresh confidence in the mercy of God, that He will have pity on thee, and will not only pardon thee, but also admit thee to His favour and confer many graces upon thee, because of His Infinite Goodness, for which be He praised and extolled for endless ages.

*EIGHTIETH MEDITATION.**For the Tuesday.*

ON THE TALENTS THAT GOD DISTRIBUTES, AND THE
ACCOUNT HE REQUIRES OF THEM.

First Point.—Consider how the first servant, who was called to give his account to the King, was in arrear of ten thousand talents, whereby are typified, according to St. Austin, the Ten Commandments of the law of God, and the many sins that men commit against them. Consider how often thou hast broken the commandments of God, and see whether the accusations to be brought against thee do not exceed ten thousand, since, as observed elsewhere, we offend God many times daily. Then go a step further, and ponder how this servant had not wherewith to satisfy the debt, nor any excuse to offer for his offence, nor any one to give bail for him, or to speak in his behalf. See what will thy plight be in presence of that most just tribunal, when ten thousand, or may be twenty, or thirty thousand, accusations and more will be preferred against thee, what answer wilt thou make? who will defend thee? who will plead for thee? Regard not this as an impossibility, or as a distant and far-off eventuality, for undoubtedly it will occur shortly, may be before to-morrow, as will certainly be the case with many, and at the furthest in a short time, the duration of life being so brief and so uncertain. Reflect on the response thou wilt have to make to all these accusations, and see what it becomes thee to do in order to secure eternal life.

Second Point.—Consider that, as Origen says, these talents of which the King required an account from his servant, are the natural and supernatural gifts that God bestows on men in order that they may therewith purchase and secure heaven, increasing their own wealth and doing good to their neighbours. Recall briefly the gifts

of understanding, the bodily strength, the learning, accomplishments and opportunities, the aids, graces, and spiritual gifts that God has bestowed on thee, and see wherein thou hast employed them and what account thou wilt be able to render thereof. Reckon up thy capital and see whether it has increased or has decreased, whether thou hast derived profit or loss from the use of those faculties and talents that God has given thee. Remember what befell the idle servant who buried the talent that God had entrusted to him instead of trading with it, in penalty of which the Lord commanded the talent to be taken from him and himself cast into hell. If, therefore, so grievous a punishment was inflicted on that servant because he allowed a single talent to lie idle, what must await thee on account of so many that God has bestowed on thee, and which are profitless in thy hands? A rigorous judgment awaits thee, and strict account will be exacted of so many mercies as thou hast received from the Hand of the Lord : take heed in time, and see what answer thou wilt make.

Third Point.—Consider that in place of serving God with the talents He has given thee, thou hast made use of them to offend Him, and that far from increasing thy capital thou hast reduced it, and thus thou findest thyself poor, indigent, and loaded with debts. See for what purposes thou hast employed thy natural beauty and strength, the intellect and faculties given thee by God, thy wealth, position, power, and influence amongst men, the offices in which thou hast been placed, the dignities to which thou hast been raised, the succour, inspirations, and graces that God has sent thee, and thy many opportunities of serving Him, and thou wilt find that by them all thou hast offended God instead of serving Him, daily falling away and growing worse instead of improving and doing better. See likewise how harsh thou hast been towards thy brethren, and how, whilst God has borne with thee and forgiven thee so much, thou hast shown no mercy in forgiving even trifles to thy

neighbours, conducting thyself as cruelly towards them as did that thoughtless servant towards his companion. What canst thou, then, expect on the day of reckoning but the same sentence that was pronounced against that unhappy man, and that God will order thee to be delivered to the torturers in order that they may execute on thee chastisement proportionate to thy guilt? Open, then, thine eyes now and hasten to trade with the talents that God has given thee, and to recover in the future what thou hast lost in the past. Cast thyself with this servant at the Feet of the Lord, and beseech Him to take pity on thee, and to give thee time until thou shalt have made capital and replaced what thou hast squandered up to the present.

Fourth Point.—Consider in what manner thou shouldst trade henceforth and repair past losses, which is that taught by Christ in His Gospel, namely, by forgiving thy neighbours the debts they have contracted towards thee so that God may forgive thine, bearing injuries patiently, and returning good for evil, whereby thou wilt merit to be counted amongst the sons of God. Raise thine eyes to heaven and contemplate those who have made use of this means, thou wilt behold them crowned as kings in the company of Christ in Whose footsteps they trod. Derive, then, this conclusion from the foregoing Meditation, and beg of God grace to be meek, benign, and pitiful towards thy neighbour, in order that God may also be merciful to thee and remit the debts thou hast contracted by sin.

*EIGHTY-FIRST MEDITATION.**For the Wednesday.*ON THE SIXTH PETITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER, "LEAD US
NOT INTO TEMPTATION."

First Point.—Consider, first, that temptations must necessarily assail us, and Christ presupposes their existence when telling us to entreat God not to permit us to yield to them. Thou art surrounded by adversaries, and thou hast in thine own person an enemy who wages war against thee. It is inevitable, therefore, that thou shouldst bear with them, and be tempted; wherefore we do not ask to be freed from suffering temptation, but to be succoured and assisted therein, and that God should not permit us to succumb to them. Whence thou shouldst learn not to be cast down when temptation assails thee; but rather, as a generous soldier of Christ, gird thyself to fight valiantly, and secure the crown. Humble thyself before the Throne of God, and implore Him to hold thee in His Hand and to bring thee forth victorious.

Second Point.—Consider how weak man is to overcome temptation when God leaves him to himself. Wherefore as he lacks strength to protect himself, Christ exhorts him to rely on the power of God, imploring the Supreme Majesty to defend him, and not to permit that he should succumb to temptation. Whence thou hast to learn how little thou art capable of without the assistance of God, since all thy victories are due to His favour. Give Him thanks for all the graces He has conferred on thee, and beseech Him to assist thee anew in every assault of the enemy. Acknowledge thy helplessness, arm thyself with the grace of God, and venture not to place thyself in the way of those temptations to which God does not expose thee. Derive hence great cautiousness, ever distrusting thyself and flying from dangerous occasions, but confident

in the Divine Bounty that God will bring thee victoriously through all those temptations to which He subjects thee.

Third Point.—Consider that, as St. Cyprian says, our Saviour here declares that the devil has no power or strength to tempt us except by the permission of God, and that all the temptations that assail us are decreed by God for our advantage. Whence thou shouldst derive great courage not to fear the devil, who is so impotent, but rather to be full of energy to fight with boldness and a sure hope of success. Endure temptations with equanimity, as coming from the Hand of the Lord, Who, on the one hand, sends the temptation by permitting our enemy to assail us, and, on the other, gives us strength to vanquish him. Say with David, “The Lord is my help and my Redeemer, of whom then shall I be afraid? Though whole armies stand up against me, I shall fear nothing.” Cry aloud, and invoke the Lord with confidence; He will be on thy side, and will not suffer thee to yield to temptation.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ commands us to raise our hearts to God in the midst of temptation, in order to teach us that prayer is the weapon with which we are to fight, and in virtue of which we shall come forth victoriously from our struggles with the devil, the world, and ourselves. St. Austin tells us that in this petition we ask for perseverance in well-doing and to derive profit from temptation, this being the end for which they are permitted by God, as well as to excite our fervour in His service, to render our spiritual life more energetic, and likewise that the risk of temptations should keep us humble and wary in the midst of peril. St. Paul bears witness to all this when he says, in speaking of himself,¹ “And lest the greatness of the revelations should lift me up, there was given me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan to buffet me; for which thing thrice I besought the Lord that it might depart from me.” Wherein the

¹ 2 Cor. xii.

Apostle proclaims, first, that God sent him the temptation for the increase of his humility, lest by the greatness of the revelations made to him he should become vainglorious ; and if St. Paul, who was confirmed in grace, recognised the need of this safeguard, how much more necessary is it to thee, exposed to so many perils and risks of perdition? The Apostle compares temptation to the sting of the lash which arouses the horse and urges him to quicken his pace ; for which purpose God sends temptations, not to discourage us, but to increase our speed and make us more diligent in His service. Again, he calls his temptation a blow which smarts, in order that thou shouldst learn the merit it procured for him, and that when temptation is like a blow that pains and distresses us it secures great merit for us in the sight of God. Consider whether the temptations of the enemy grieve thee, whether they distress or delight thee, in order to see whether they are meritorious for heaven. Lastly, St. Paul tells us that he made use of prayer, beseeching God to hold him by the hand, and to cause the angel of Satan to depart from him, for with this weapon is temptation overcome. Arm thyself, then, with prayer, and implore God to cast an eye of pity upon thee and not to suffer thee to succumb to temptation.

EIGHTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE SEVENTH PETITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER,
"DELIVER US FROM EVIL."

First Point.—Consider that we herein ask God to deliver us from evil, confessing by this petition that we are so weak and so powerless that unless God frees us from harm we cannot free ourselves ; for all our strength, as the Apostle says, is from God, and must come to us

from His mighty Hand. Humble thyself in the Presence of God, and in thy poverty and indigence beseech Him to take pity upon thee and to deliver thee from all evil, because thou hast not strength to free thyself, and if He sustain thee not thou wilt fall into a very abyss of misery.

Second Point.—Consider that, as St. Austin says, we here ask God to deliver us from all evil, both from that into which we have already fallen and from that to which we might in the future succumb. Cast thine eyes over the past, and see into what depths of misery thou hast fallen, and into what a mire of sin. Cast a glance over the present, and behold the actual state of thy soul. Look into the future, and consider the many faults and crimes that thou mightest commit, and that on all sides thou art hemmed in by enemies. Like Jonas engulfed in the waters and swallowed up by the whale, raise thou also thy voice to God, and from the depths of thy heart entreat Him to stretch forth His Hand, and deliver thee from all evil: from that of the past, forgiving thy sins; from that of the present, freeing thee from sin and from the occasions thereof; and from that of the future, not permitting thee to be entangled in the snares of Satan.

Third Point.—Consider how sin is here called all evil, for naught else but sin alone deserves to be called by that name; and if God delivers us from sin He will at the same time free us from all evil. Ponder here the magnitude of this evil, which makes us the enemies of God, exiles us from heaven, condemns us to hell, and purchases for us death, grief, sadness, and endless torments. Reflect that all the misfortunes and sufferings in the world cannot be accounted evils when compared with the evil of sin, wherefore thou shouldst be comforted in whatever misfortunes fall to thy lot so long as thou dost not fall into sin or forfeit the friendship of God, this were the greatest of all evils, that which alone is a real ill. Derive hence an extreme hatred of sin, and a firm resolution to die rather than to fall into it, and

beg of God many times in the day to deliver thee from this evil.

Fourth Point.—Consider that we are commanded to implore this favour for all, and not for ourselves alone. Thou art to pray for thyself and for the whole world, and to implore God not to suffer any of us to succumb to temptation, but to deliver every one from all evil, namely, from falling into sin, and into the snares that Satan sets for each one. Cast a glance round the world and contemplate the many nations that are steeped in the mire of their vices, some in infidelity and idolatry, others in heresy, some a prey to false sects which deceive them, others to their own obstinacy and blind pertinacity, others to their own malice or cowardice, even whilst the light of Faith shines on them. Raise up thy voice to God with zeal for His glory, and a true desire for the salvation of souls; implore Him with earnestness to grant light to all, and to send labourers and preachers who shall draw them from the mire of vice and the darkness of sin and bring them to the fruition of His grace, delivering them thus from all evil.

EIGHTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE EIGHT BEATITUDES—(MATT. V.)

First Point.—Gaze on thy Heavenly Teacher, seated on the mountain surrounded by His disciples, in the midst of a multitude of people, instructing and teaching them the road to heaven. Mingle with His audience, and approach as near as thou canst to the Lord with all reverence and attention; be thyself one of His hearers, hearkening to His heavenly doctrine, and profiting thereby. Entreat Him to teach thee, and to give thee

light to understand and grace to execute His instructions, so as to deserve to be reckoned amongst His disciples.

Second Point.—Consider how the Evangelist says that Jesus, “seeing the multitudes (that were following Him), went up into a mountain, . . . and opening His mouth, He taught them.” Ponder the holy zeal for the salvation of souls that burnt within His Breast, and how He lost no opportunity of preaching and doing good to all. Do thou learn hence, on the one hand, the zeal thou shouldst exercise in seeking the salvation of thy neighbours, making use of every endeavour to further it, and losing no opportunity of doing good to them. On the other hand, render repeated thanks to God for the favours He confers on us, beseech Him to teach thee how to journey on the road to heaven, and to communicate to thee one spark of that sacred fire wherewith to labour zealously for the good of all, and particularly for that of thine own soul.

Third Point.—Consider that Christ chose the mountain top as the spot whence to declare His doctrine, both to manifest thereby its perfection, and also to show that such lofty and heavenly doctrine can only be fitly taught and learnt on the mountain, raised high above the things of earth and nigh to heaven. Learn hence the value thou shouldst set on the Word of God, of which David says,¹ “I have loved Thy commandments above gold and the topaz;” draw hence, likewise, the dispositions thou shouldst possess in order that this heavenly seed should take root in thee, placing it next to thy heart and soul, and setting aside all earthly affections. O Lord! grant me grace to leave all things, to follow Thee to the summit of the mountain by mortification, and to profit as I ought by Thy holy teaching.

Fourth Point.—Consider those words of the Evangelist: “When He sat down His disciples came to Him.” Draw near to God with them, if thou wouldst be His disciple, and that wish His doctrine to take root in thee. Con-

¹ Psalm cxviii. 127.

sider that Christ sat down because He took time when treating of the good of souls, not proceeding hurriedly or in a cursory manner, but leisurely and slowly. Herein a lesson is given us to treat with full deliberation what concerns the profit of our souls and that of our neighbours, see how offhand thou hast heretofore been in these matters, and how wrongly thou hast acted in giving so much time to worldly business and earthly profits, and so little to those of heaven, executing thy spiritual duties in a perfunctory and superficial manner. Bewail thy blindness, beg pardon of God, and entreat His grace to amend and to deal deliberately with the concerns of thy soul and of thy neighbours, treating more cursorily those of earth as becomes a passenger, and only when they tend to the acquisition of eternal life.

EIGHTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE FIRST BEATITUDE: "BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN."

First Point.—Consider that, as St. Austin says, Christ laid the foundation of the spiritual life in poverty and humility of heart, for this is the first stone to be laid in order that the edifice may be solid and durable and capable of being perseveringly reared till it reach to heaven. Those who found their building upon wealth are, as Christ tells us, like a man who would build his house upon the sand, which has no solidity or consistency, and thus the whole building falls to the ground, and the ruin thereof is great. Ponder, then, the importance of this virtue; see on what foundation thou hast built until now, and what stability there is in thy spiritual life. Examine whether thou hast not raised castles in the air

founded on vanity and pride ; tremble lest thine edifice fall and perish, and endeavour with the help of Divine Grace to establish thyself on the firm rock of the humility and poverty of Christ.

Second Point.—Consider that all poor are not blessed, but such only as are poor in spirit, that is, as St. Jerome explains, voluntarily and willingly so. These are not poor because they lack wealth, but because they voluntarily despise riches for Christ's sake, their hearts being detached from earthly goods and fixed only on such as are heavenly and eternal. Such as these are truly poor in the sight of God, and the rest rich in heart even though they possess nothing, wherefore the Wise Man tells us :¹ "One is as it were rich when he hath nothing, and another is as it were poor when he hath great riches." The former is filled with covetousness after wealth, whilst the heart of the latter is detached from it, and thus he is poor in spirit, whilst the other is of the rich. Turn now thine eyes on thyself and search thy heart ; see whether it be smitten with affection for the perishable things of this world, whether thou dost desire them or possess them with delight, whether thou dost abandon them with regret and dost keenly feel their loss. If such be the case, it is a sure sign that thy heart is set on them and possessed with the love of them. Endeavour to detach thy soul and to raise it up to the love of eternal riches and to the willing abandonment of temporal wealth, in order to deserve to be reckoned amongst the poor in spirit, and thus to merit the kingdom of heaven.

Third Point.—Ponder how empty and deceitful, how frail and valueless, are all earthly things when compared with spiritual ones. All the wealth and possessions of the earth are as dreams ; and weighed in a true balance, that is, before God, Who values each thing at its real worth, gold is no weightier than mud, and silver as light as dust, nor are pearls of greater value than the shells that contain them, and precious stones are but as

¹ Prov. xiii.

the flint of the roads, whilst the contempt of all these things is of infinite price, and the merit of him who despises and tramples on them all for the love of Christ is incalculable. Go a step further, and consider how soon this drama will end and the breath of life be gone ; then will the deceitful veil be lifted which blinds men with the dust and esteem of the riches and honours of the world ; then will the light of truth dissipate this delusion and shine forth to manifest things as they are, giving to each its true value. Consider how deceived will they find themselves to have been who have striven to hoard up false riches, how derided will they be, and how wasted their toil which leaves them empty-handed and condemned for eternity. Ponder, likewise, what will be the delight of those who, following the counsels of Christ, shall have purchased the heavenly kingdom by their contempt for temporal wealth, and heartily resolve to imitate them, in order to merit to reign then with Christ in heaven.

Fourth Point.—Consider that, as St. John Chrysostom says, the poor are beggars who live by alms, which they solicit from door to door, and he adds, in the kingdom of God they are blessed who, like the indigent, are aware of their poverty, and beg at His gates the graces and spiritual aids which constitute the wealth of the soul. Acknowledge thy poverty and the need thou hast of God's help, since thou canst do nothing without His grace, and, like a beggar, solicit an alms from His abundant treasury. Address thyself to the Saints, going, as it were, from door to door imploring their favour and intercession with God and some share in the spiritual wealth conferred on them, and cease not to cry aloud until thou hast obtained these graces and enriched thyself with celestial wealth.

*EIGHTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.***For the Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost.**

ON THE GOSPEL OF THE DAY—(MATT. XXII.)

The sacred Evangelist tells us how the Pharisees and the Herodians came together to Christ with the design of ensnaring Him into some word of which to make an accusation against Him. And for this purpose they inquired of Him whether it was lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, and the Saviour, gazing on the coin which bore the effigy of Cæsar, replied, "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's."

First Point.—Consider how those who could not agree in good things came together to do evil, and how characteristic it is of the wicked to unite against the just. Observe their intentions, for, as the Wise Man says,¹ "They lie in wait for their own blood, and practise deceits against their own souls." Be careful not to ally thyself with such men, enter not into their plans, attend not their assemblies, follow not their advice, which is always injurious and has a tendency to evil. Beseech the Lord to deliver thee from them.

Second Point.—Consider the resolution formed at this meeting, which was to set a snare for Christ in order to entrap Him in His words. Learn hence how circumspect and cautious thou shouldst be in speaking, not trusting everybody, for thou art ignorant of the intention of him who addresses thee, and what snare he may be preparing for thee by his argument. Bridle thy tongue and weigh thy words, sell them not too cheap, and learn of Christ not to say anything that could hurt any one.

Third Point.—Consider how the snare was set under the bait of adulation. For they began by praising and

¹ Prov. i.

extolling Christ as an acknowledged Teacher of the Truth and of sound doctrine, Who spared no one, and more of the same import, in order to lead Him to the point and if possible overthrow Him. Perceive herein how pernicious flattery is, and how dangerous the desire for praise, and beseech the Lord to deliver thee from both. "Hedge in thine ears with thorns,"¹ as the Wise Man says, and allow no access to the enchantress who with soft words seeks to flatter in order to vanquish thee. Harken more readily to the truth that stings than to the falsehood that pleases, and say with David,² "The just man shall correct me in mercy, and shall reprove me: but let not the oil of the sinner fatten my head." Learn from this Meditation to hearken willingly to the admonitions of the just, and not to lend ear to the flattery of the wicked; for the latter will lead thee to perdition, the former to salvation.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ penetrated their malicious scheme and the evil intention with which they questioned Him. Ponder the patience with which He bore with them, without openly exposing their malice or replying with bitterness. See the prudence with which He broke through their meshes, telling them to render to Cæsar the things of Cæsar and to God what belongs to God. Learn patience and prudence from the Teacher of the world, and study how to reply meekly to the insults of thine enemies, and to moderate their anger by gentleness; for, as the Holy Spirit says,³ "A mild answer breaketh wrath, but a harsh word stirreth up fury." Entreat this grace of the Lord Who teaches all meekness to thee, beg Him to hold thee by the hand, that thou mayst not be impatient nor be moved to revenge under insult and injury, but only to humility and meekness, after the Saviour's own example.

¹ Eccl. xxviii.² Ps. cxi.³ Prov. xv.

*EIGHTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.**For the Monday.*

ON THE VIRTUES THAT BECOME A GOOD MASTER AND A GOOD DISCIPLE, AFTER THE PATTERN OF THE SAVIOUR.

First Point.—Ponder the words addressed to Christ by these persons who came to consult Him, and, setting aside their wicked intention therein, ponder for the glory of God and the good of thy soul the truths they uttered. Consider, first, how they style the Saviour Master, for He is the Teacher of souls and His doctrine is true, whilst all other is false and deceitful. Ponder how important it is to thee to take thy place in His school, and to study His teaching, and resolve to desert the “counsels of the ungodly,” who are doctors of falsehood, and, as David expresses it, sit¹ “in the chair of pestilence,” for their teaching is false and mortiferous. Bewail the time spent in the school of frivolity and in obeying worldly counsels, and turn away therefrom. Implore God with tears to accept thee for His disciple, to enlighten and instruct thee, and by the light of His heavenly teaching to dissipate the darkness that envelopes thee.

Second Point.—Consider the second quality attributed to Christ, namely, that He teaches the way of heaven with all truth and clearness. Such is the characteristic of a good teacher, in such wise does he instruct his disciples. See whether thou art a disciple of Christ, whether thou dost accept His doctrine and walk in the path of heaven which He teaches, or whether thou travellest along the way of perdition taught by the world. Note which road thou hast followed until now, and consider which thou desirest to follow for the future; beg of God to forgive thee the past, and to grant thee grace to walk henceforth in the right road of eternal life.

¹ Psalm i.

Third Point.—Consider the third quality attributed to the Saviour, namely, that He disregards personal advantages, and teaches disinterestedly with no other object in view than the improvement of His disciples. This is another characteristic of a good master, namely, that he be clean-handed, and have no aim beyond the spiritual welfare of his followers. Take account of thine own soul, and learn from so illustrious a Teacher not to seek temporal interests in thine actions, but only spiritual good for thyself and thy neighbour, and be suspicious of any thought that dissents from this line of conduct.

Fourth Point.—Consider the fourth virtue attributed to Christ, namely, that He regards not the person of men, but is the same to all, teaching all alike, telling the truth equally to all, being neither overawed by power nor restrained by greatness, flattering not the noble, but treating all with the same freedom, even as the sun illumines all alike. Oh, truly great virtue of the good master and of the good preacher! Implore it of God, and learn not to be swayed by human respect, nor by outward appearances, but, like Christ, be guided only by truth and charity, making no distinction of persons, seeking the welfare of all and succouring as willingly and with equal solicitude the little and the great, the poor and the rich, and speaking the truth to all. Beg of God this courageous freedom, in order to become the disciple of the Saviour and to follow His footsteps in all things.

EIGHTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.**For the Tuesday.**

ON THE ANSWER GIVEN BY CHRIST, "RENDER TO CÆSAR THE THINGS THAT ARE CÆSAR'S, AND TO GOD THE THINGS THAT ARE GOD'S—(MATT. XXII.)

First Point.—Consider how, before giving judgment, Christ our Redeemer not only listened to the appeal addressed to Him, but asked to see the coin of the tribute, and was shown Cæsar's money; and gazing thereon, and contemplating the effigy it bore, He delivered His verdict. Herein we are taught not to judge hastily, or on hearsay, but as far as possible on the evidence of our own sight. Whilst considering the integrity of the Saviour's conduct, reproach thyself of rashness; see with what facility and want of thought thou givest judgment right and left on all subjects that arise, and entreat the Lord to grant thee the gift of a sober judgment in all thy decisions, that they be not made inconsiderately, but after prudent deliberation and with due knowledge of the facts of the case.

Second Point.—Consider how, when Christ beheld the effigy of Cæsar on the coin, he held the tribute thereof to be due to him, and ordered that it should be paid to him as rightfully his. Oh, my soul! behold the image of God traced and engraven on thee from thy birth, so that it is co-existent with thy very being; acknowledge that thou dost belong to God as His creature, and that it is thy duty to give thyself to Him and to be entirely His. See how thou hast fulfilled this obligation until now, and how thou shouldst fulfil it for the future. Behold after Who's likeness thou art made, and see how many times thou hast marred and defaced that image. Bewail thine ingratitude and heedlessness, lest God no longer recognise thee as His, and endeavour with the help of Divine Grace

to restore the likeness of God in thy soul in all its perfection by means of the brilliant colouring of virtue. Turn thyself towards God with thy whole heart, and say with all tenderness of soul, Thou, O Lord, Who didst create me, renew the likeness that Thou didst bestow ; for Thou dost see my insufficiency, and that I can do nothing without Thy assistance.

Third Point.—Ponder the decision of the Saviour : Render to Cæsar what belongs to Cæsar, and to God that which belongs to God. That is to say, give to secular concerns and to the body what is absolutely necessary for life, and to God all that appertains to the welfare of the soul. See how different has thy practice been, spending all thy care, thy time, and thy strength, on the business of this world and on the pampering of thy body, whilst for God and for thy soul thou hast left nothing but the least part and the worst of these. Consider that thy soul belongs to thee no less than thy body, that thou hast deeper obligations towards God than towards the world, and that thou art more dependent on Him than on Cæsar or on all the monarchs of the earth. How, then, dost thou manage so ill as to give thyself wholly to the world and not at all to God ? Change thy life, alter thy manner of dealing, and give thyself wholly to God, since thou art His, and grant to the world that only which is absolutely necessary for the maintenance of this life in order to secure that which is eternal.

Fourth Point.—Ponder that no question was put to Christ as to what was due to God, but only as to what was due to Cæsar ; but our Redeemer, taking advantage of the appeal made to Him, told them at one and the same time of the duty they owed to Cæsar, and of that which they likewise owed to God, to which the first place should be given. Learn hence to be ever ready and on the watch not to lose any opportunity of doing good to thy neighbour in whatever manner thou mayest be able, and to derive profit for the soul from every occurrence. Beseech this grace of the Lord, and seek the good of

thine own soul as well as that of others, never letting slip either time or opportunity of furthering the interests of God's honour and glory.

EIGHTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN PROMISED BY GOD TO THE
POOR IN SPIRIT.

First Point.—"Blessed," Christ tells us, "are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Ponder, first, that Christ does not say that it shall be theirs, nor that it shall be given to them, but that it *is* already theirs, because this virtue at once enriches its possessors with such spiritual gifts and wealth that they forthwith begin to enjoy most intense beatitude even on earth. Were there no other reward attached to this poverty than the mere shaking off of the burthen of worldly possessions, of the cares they engender, of the labour their acquisition costs, and of the solicitude their retention imposes, this were already great felicity. Consider all that the rich undergo, and from what a weight of anxieties the poor are free; then see what spiritual consolations God communicates to souls in proportion as they forego temporal pleasures, and thou wilt discover what true bliss and heavenly tranquillity is theirs. Bewail the blindness of mortals who esteem the rich happy and the poor unhappy, and whose covetousness for temporal wealth makes them forgetful of the care of their souls. Implore of God the grace to abandon all earthly things, and to enjoy on earth that felicity which is the commencement of eternal beatitude.

Second Point.—Consider that the poor in spirit are also blessed, and already begin to possess the kingdom of heaven, because they govern their passions, and are

masters over their appetites instead of being subject to them. David, in his 75th Psalm, calls the rich "men of riches," because they are slaves of their wealth, and are rather possessed by it than possessors of it, for they obey and observe in all things the laws imposed thereby, and for its sake they toil and sweat without respite for a single day. Oh, miserable slavery, to amass that which others are to enjoy! The poor in spirit who voluntarily renounce wealth, and subject not themselves to this covetousness and avarice, live and reign free from these trammels, and their souls are at liberty to fly to God. Cast thine eyes on thyself, and consider how long thou hast dwelt in this wretched slavery; bewail thy past error, and shake off from thy neck the heavy yoke of temporal cares. Pray God to grant thee an unfettered mind wherewith to serve Him, and to reign over all thine appetites and passions.

Third Point.—Consider that there are not two heavens, neither can any one enjoy two kingdoms here and hereafter. If, then, thou wouldst enjoy beatitude, thou must of necessity renounce the wealth and honours of the earth; wherefore Christ says that the kingdom of heaven belongs to the poor, and not to the rich, for the latter have here that consolation which is wanting to the former. Lay stress, then, on the consideration of the difference that exists between the one and the other state, and see what folly it is to forfeit eternal for temporal wealth, the reality for the shadow, and resolve firmly to renounce the world in order to secure the possession and fruition of God.

Fourth Point.—Gaze on Christ our Redeemer, Who is the model and pattern of all the faithful, and Whose Life is the Way of Life. Consider how heartily He embraced poverty and despised riches from the manger to the cross; behold what kingdom was His on earth, and what dominion He enjoys in heaven. Recall to mind the joy with which the Saints who followed Christ trampled under foot, and despised that which the world worships, and

take courage from their example to follow in His footsteps, and to scorn the world and its riches ; thus wilt thou now enjoy peace and heavenly tranquillity, and hereafter the kingdom of heaven.

EIGHTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

Thursday.

ON THE SECOND BEATITUDE: "BLESSED ARE THE MEEK, FOR THEY SHALL POSSESS THE LAND."

First Point.—Consider how Christ with Divine Wisdom joined together these two virtues of poverty of spirit and meekness of heart ; for the one follows after the other, inasmuch as the rich are arrogant and proud, passionate and irritable, because of the haughtiness to which their power gives rise. Even as a river is more rapid and impetuous when swollen by many waters, and more tranquil when less well replenished, so in like manner men habitually become more proud and passionate as their wealth increases, and more humble and meek the less they possess. The poor need great patience and meekness in order to endure the contempt, injuries, and discomforts that their poverty occasions ; whence thou shouldst learn that as poverty is the first step that leads to the kingdom of heaven, so the second is meekness, which is based thereon, and that this virtue is necessary to thee in order to attain to that bliss wherein lies all thy happiness. Implore this virtue of God, and resolve to acquire it by all the means in thy power.

Second Point.—Consider in what this virtue consists, namely, as St. Ambrose asserts, in not being moved to anger nor revenge, in suffering with extreme patience, never using harsh words, or returning evil for evil, or contending with any one for the things of earth, but rather yielding to all with mildness, doing good to all

and evil to none. Ponder all these qualities of this most august virtue, and see whether thou dost possess them, or rather how far thou art from their possession, and beg of the Lord to bestow them on thee. Remember what St. Peter says of Christ,¹ "Who, when He was reviled, did not revile; when He suffered He threatened not," but rather as a meek lamb endured all silently. Recall likewise the words of Isaias,² "The bruised reed He shall not break, and the smoking flax He shall not quench." That is to say, He would not slight a man borne down with toil and affliction, nor grieve the afflicted by the least increase of sorrow, but rather would relieve all with benignity and compassion, those characteristic virtues of the meek and humble. Ponder, then, the qualities of this virtue, and leave no stone unturned in the endeavour to acquire it.

Third Point.—Consider the value of this virtue of meekness, which is such as to reproduce in man the likeness of God, Who says,³ "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart." Many were the virtues of Christ, He possessed them all in the highest perfection, and we should study them all in Him, yet He passed them all over in silence, and only proposed to our imitation these two sister virtues of meekness and humility. By means of these virtues man is made like unto his Redeemer, becomes His living image, and merits to be coheir of the kingdom of heaven, where all are meek, and no one threatens or contends against the other, but all abide and continue in profound peace. Thus are the humble like unto the blessed, they enjoy extreme peace in their souls, whilst the irascible and proud neither enjoy it themselves nor suffer others to do so.

Fourth Point.—Cast thine eyes on Christ our Saviour, and on the Most Blessed Virgin and the Saints. Contemplate the meekness and patience they exhibited on all the many occasions of their lives which demanded the exercise of these virtues. See how they never yielded to

¹ 1 Peter ii.² Isaias xlii.³ Matt. xi.

anger or resentment, observe the mildness and patience of their replies and of their behaviour towards all. How sweet the words that fell from their lips, the inclinations of their hearts, and the dispositions of their souls ! Note how they welcomed every one with extreme goodwill and benevolence, always doing them good, not evil. Let their example enkindle within thee lively desires of acquiring this virtue ; beg of God to grant it thee, and implore His Saints to intercede with the Divine Majesty, and obtain it for thee.

NINETIETH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE REWARD PROMISED BY CHRIST TO THE MEEK : "FOR THEY SHALL POSSESS THE LAND."

First Point.—Consider the reward that God promises to the meek of heart, according to the various interpretations of the Saints, as quoted by St. Thomas in his *Catena* on the Gospels. The first is from St. John Chrysostom, who says that God promises to the meek the possession of the earth, because more shall be given to them and in greater abundance than is forfeited by their abstention from litigation and strife, and it is undeniable that the meek and compassionate, the peaceful and gentle of heart, captivate the affections of all and obtain the mastery over all hearts. Such persons are beloved and cherished by all, even by God Himself, of Whom it is written, "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."¹ Ponder how hateful to both God and man are the irascible, the hard-hearted, and the passionate, and observe the affectionate tenderness with which meek, gentle, and good-tempered persons are regarded, and beseech God to grant thee meekness, in

¹ James iv.

order to merit the reward He promises to the meek of heart.

Second Point.—Consider, secondly, that as the same St. Chrysostom affirms, in promising to the meek the possession of the earth, God means dominion over themselves, over their own souls and bodies, by the mastery of their passions and the subjection of their appetites, which will secure to them the enjoyment of heavenly peace and tranquillity, undisturbed and unruffled by any thing on earth, which is the height of bliss. The wicked, the proud, and the irascible are constantly irritated, and like the sea are troubled by every passing wind or breath of air,¹ for “There is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord;” whilst the meek and humble always enjoy peace, not only with others, but likewise with themselves, and they keep their passions and appetites at bay, because God grants to them the mastery over themselves. Dwell, then, on the value of this reward, wherein is already a participation of heaven, and inflame thyself with desires of securing it by means of this virtue.

Third Point.—Consider that, according to the interpretation of St. Jerom, this land which Christ promises to the meek is that of which Christ Himself takes possession within us; for, as the same Saint affirms, He abides in us by meekness, and the meek of heart possess the land of the Lord, because He gives and communicates Himself most liberally to them. Oh, most blessed virtue! Oh, great bliss of the meek of heart! for they shall possess God, and God possesses them; Christ dwells in their souls, and they abide in Him! Weigh well, by meditation, the great value of this reward; see what price thou shouldst pay for it, what offer thou shouldst make were it to be bought, and how thou shouldst esteem it when acquired. Resolve in thy heart to labour unceasingly to secure it, even though it be at the cost of thy life.

Fourth Point.—Consider that, as St. Ambrose teaches, this land of which the possession belongs to the meek is

¹ *Isaias* xlviii.

that most happy country of heaven, which David calls¹ “the land of the living.” This earth is the land of those who die, but in that other land there is neither death nor sickness, neither sorrow nor discord, no sadness nor evil ; there all things are good, there is peace, there concord, joy, happiness, tranquillity, and security in God, in Whom the bliss of all is centred. Oh, blessed they who merit to find a place in that land ! The meek shall possess it as their own inheritance, without fear of forfeiting it for all eternity. Rejoice in the consideration of this reward, and give thanks to God a thousand times for having destined it to be the recompense of this virtue. Entreat the Lord to give thee grace to become meek and humble of heart, so that thou mayest be ready to suffer and endure all and to lose the whole world, rather than fail in this virtue.

NINETY-FIRST MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE THIRD BEATITUDE : “ BLESSED ARE THEY THAT WEEP,
FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED.”

First Point.—Ponder, first, how Christ by these words condemned the mirth, festivities, and entertainments of the world which have no relation with that eternal life which God promises to those who weep, but rather with eternal death, according to the words of Job,² “They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to hell,” and to the words of Christ,³ “Woe to you that now laugh, for you shall mourn and weep.” For as the day follows after the night, and night after the day, in like manner darkest night in the next world follows after the pleasures of this, whilst to penance and tears succeed light, joy, and eternal bliss. Ponder, then, how great is the blindness of mortals who, for the sake of

¹ Ps. cxiv.

² Job xxi.

³ Luke vi.

enjoying here a short-lived dream of happiness, forfeit that true and perpetual bliss that God promises for ever to those who here weep and afflict themselves with penance. Ponder, also, the prudence of the just who, setting aside the sensual delights of this miserable life, secure to themselves the eternal joys of the next. Oh, happy they that weep, for they shall be eternally comforted, and unhappy they that rejoice, for they shall lament without consolation, and shall weep for ever and ever in hell! Ponder, meditate, and reflect how great is this error of the wicked, and how great the wisdom of the just, and resolve to imitate these latter rather than the former, in order to merit eternal consolations.

Second Point. — Consider of what value are tears, which, being weighed in the balance, are meritorious of heaven, since God has attached to them the value of beatitude itself, saying, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." Wherein ponder, with St. Austin and St. John Chrysostom, that the whole value of tears lies in repentance, for grief born of true contrition wipes out and obliterates sin and secures pardon and the grace of the Lord, which is the seed of beatitude; whilst tears shed over temporal concerns are wasted and profitless. Ponder this truth, and spend not pearls of such price on what is worthless, but rather esteeming them at their true value, beseech our Lord to grant thee the gift of tears and of true contrition for thy sins, in order that thou mayest obtain their forgiveness and therewith His divine favour.

Third Point. — Consider the motives for tears suggested by the many sins committed in the world. What infidelity, heresies, false sects striving against true religion! Consider the wars amongst Christians, the sins of the faithful who should serve God better, the negligence of pastors and teachers who fail to arouse the world and minister not to the wants of the fold of Christ. Behold what an infinite number of souls are condemned because of this neglect, which peoples hell and leaves heaven

unfilled. Weep and lament in the Presence of God, and implore Him earnestly and perseveringly to put an end to so many evils, and to send pastors who shall look to the welfare of His Church and to the salvation of souls, and of thine in particular, which should be thy first care.

Fourth Point. — Consider what is this consolation which the Saviour promises to those that weep. In the first place, He will console them, as He did St. Mary Magdalen, by the forgiveness of their sins, which is the greatest consolation. In the second place, He will give them the hope of eternal life and of obtaining the fulfilment of their desires, as He did holy Simeon, who wept for the salvation of Israel. In the third place, He will console them by giving them in return for their tears such interior joy and ineffable delight as shall soothe their grief and alleviate their distress. And lastly, as St. Austin says, they will be consoled in heaven, when God will change their mourning into joy and their lamentations into ceaseless alleluias and heavenly canticles. There, St. John¹ tells us, "God shall wipe away the tears from their eyes, and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more," for all will be changed into continuous joy, into perpetual and uninterrupted glory and delight. Contemplate the magnitude of this reward, and how greatly it is enjoyed at this moment by those who have attained to it. Strive to merit it by the grace of the Lord, and implore Him to bestow on thee this gift of tears that thou mayest weep over thine own sins and those of all mankind, with the hope of obtaining from His Hand heavenly consolation.

¹ Apoc. xxi.

NINETY-SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost.

ON THE GOSPEL FOR THE DAY—(MATT. IX.)

This Gospel gives the account of two miracles performed by Christ our Lord : one on the daughter of the ruler who was dead, whom He took by the hand and restored to life ; the other on the woman troubled with an issue of blood during twelve years, who recovered health by touching the hem of His garment.

First Point.—Consider how St. Matthew says that, whilst Christ was preaching, a certain ruler came to seek Him, and to beg of Him to restore life and health to his daughter. Ponder, with St. Anselm, how difficult it is for the princes and mighty ones of the earth to approach God, who, as it were, draws them to Him in spite of themselves by means of sicknesses and afflictions, and they come compelled by necessity. Do not wait for God thus to force thee to enter His service, but offer thyself voluntarily to Him ; come, not constrained by necessity, but freely of thine own accord, and offer thyself forthwith to Him in order to serve Him eternally.

Second Point.—Consider the respect and veneration with which this ruler approached the Saviour ; for the Evangelist says he “adored Him,” which he doubtless did by prostrating himself to the earth, with great humility, in presence of all the people, at the same time imploring the cure of his daughter. Learn hence two things : first, the respect and reverence with which thou shouldst honour Christ and the priests and superiors who hold His place, in imitation of the conduct of this ruler ; secondly, how God is pleased to humble the powerful of the earth, and with what ease He prostrates them at His Feet. Humble thyself in the Presence of God, and learn not to fear the power of princes, since it is so

weak that God can in a moment humble them and bring them to His Feet as submissive as this ruler. Take the Divine Majesty for thy Protector, and beg of Him to shield thee, and then thou need not fear the mighty of this world.

Third Point.—Consider in this daughter of the ruler the condition of man, and the weakness and inconstancy of human nature. Contemplate her, young, rich, noble, well-favoured, esteemed and cherished, in the flower of her youth, dead. Such is the condition of man and our frailty; behold how little trust can be placed in youth or strength, in riches or nobility: all these are but as the flowers that expand at dawn, and are faded by the night. Derive from this Meditation a true knowledge of what life is: contempt for the perishable things of earth, and appreciation of what is eternal and heavenly.

Fourth Point.—Consider how, on hearing this petition, the Saviour of the world arose forthwith, without delay, and cutting short His instruction started on the road, accompanying the ruler to go and raise his daughter to life. Thou hast much to learn from all this: first, the piety and mercy of the Lord Who, with such promptitude yielded to the prayer of His petitioner, and granted its fulfilment; whence derive great confidence in the Divine goodness, that thy prayers will be heard, that God will yield to thy petitions and will grant what thou dost solicit. Rejoice to have so pitiful and exorable a Lord; beg and entreat of Him with entire confidence to give spiritual life to thy soul, and to grant every grace to thee and thine. Learn, likewise, to be thyself exorable and willing to grant what is asked of thee, especially in all works of mercy and charity. Delay not in doing good to thy neighbour, even as Christ delayed not to do good to this father and his child, lest, repaying thee in thine own coin, God postpone the accomplishment of thy petitions.

*NINETY-THIRD MEDITATION.**For the Monday.*

ON THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF THE SOUL.

First Point.—Consider in the deceased daughter of the ruler an image of thy soul, daughter of the Ruler of Heaven, dead by the death of sin. Ponder the grief of the father at the death of his daughter, and what pains he took on her behalf, and see how little sorrow thou hast for the death of thy soul, and that thou dost nothing to restore it to life. Reflect slowly how thou hast forfeited the life of grace for the sake of giving thyself up to pleasure and amusements; behold thy soul dead, and see how all mourn over her save thee, who shouldst bewail her death more bitterly than any one else. Thou dost abandon thy soul to the power of death; thou sufferest her to become the food of worms, to be corrupted by vice, rather than turn to God, and beseech Him to restore her to life, as this ruler did on his daughter's behalf. Open thine eyes, and acknowledge thy misfortune; weep over thy loss, and seek the Lord; cast thyself at His Feet; solicit of Him with tears the life of thy soul, and be confident that He will grant it to thee, as He did to this dead girl.

Second Point.—Consider how this ruler set aside all worldly distinctions and considerations for the sake of his daughter's life; and being himself worshipped, sought, and solicited by others, he came notwithstanding in person to seek Christ, throwing himself at His Feet before all the people, adoring Him and imploring His assistance. Learn to postpone all human respect and worldly considerations to the health of thy soul and to thy spiritual progress. Trample under foot the criticisms, judgments, and sayings of men in what concerns the service of God, even as David did in dancing before the Ark of the Testa-

ment, heedless of the sneers of the people and of the reproaches of his wife Michol. Seek to please God and His Saints, whose judgments are just, and make no account of the lying and empty words of men.

Third Point.—Consider Christ arrived at the house of the ruler, and sending away the multitude who were assembled there to weep over her, in order to restore the young girl to life. Wherein He taught us that for the recovery of the life of the soul it is necessary to withdraw from the bustle of the crowd, to set aside all worldly concerns, and to retire alone into the Presence of God. Ponder how much thou dost lose whilst engaged in exterior occupations, and how many falls have been occasioned thee by the affairs of this world, by mixing in the crowd and frequenting the assemblies of men. Withdraw thyself from that which withdraws thee from God; avoid these occupations, and retire with Christ into the solitude of prayer and silence if thou wouldst restore life to thy soul.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ took the dead girl by the hand, and, as though arousing her from sleep, restored her to life. Herein He taught us the means by which the soul is to be raised from the death of sin to the life of grace, namely, by God extending to us His Hand by His assistance and grace, and our placing ours in His by the co-operation of our good works and our correspondence with His graces. Oh, my soul! meditate and consider how many times God has stretched forth His Hand in order to raise thee up, bestowing His assistance and grace upon thee, and calling thee to His service, and thou hast failed to put forth thine, or rather hast withdrawn it from His Divine Majesty to cling to vice. Bewail thine ingratitude, reflect on thyself, and, taking pity on thine own soul, seek to appease God; stretch out thy hands, and raise them to the Divine Majesty; cry out to God, at the same time labouring in His service. Beseech Him to look down on thee, and to visit thee, as He did this dead girl; beg Him to hold out His Hand

to thee, and to retain thee in His grasp, that thou mayest recover the life thou hast forfeited, and arise to a new manner of life, to persevere for ever in His service.

NINETY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE CARE OF THE SOULS OF OTHERS, IN IMITATION OF CHRIST.

First Point.—Consider the promptitude with which Christ set forth at once to accompany the ruler and restore his daughter to life, not allowing the sermon in which He was engaged, or anything else whatsoever, to interfere. If thou be a superior learn to seek the spiritual welfare of thy subjects, making use of all possible diligence therein, attending immediately to all their wants, and allowing no other occupation, however apparently useful, to hinder thee. Ponder how important and necessary was the preaching of Christ, yet He left His instruction and went to restore this young girl to life, and by means of this miracle spread the fame of His Divinity and news of His doctrine throughout all that country. Learn hence that perchance it may be advantageous to turn aside even from such holy and useful works, in order to succour thy neighbour and to watch over his life, as Christ watched over this girl. Beg of the Lord to give thee grace to imitate Him, and prudence to follow Him aright in the fulfilment of the duties of thy office.

Second Point.—Consider how many there are whose souls are dead because thou labourest not for their restoration to life, and who would arise from the death of sin to the life of grace didst thou strive to enable them; and tremble at the account thou wilt have to give of their souls to Christ at the day of judgment. Beseech the Lord to grant thee energy and resolution to arise from

the slothfulness that holds thee back, and from the bonds of those occupations in which thou art entangled ; to cast aside self-love for the love of thy neighbours who are perishing, and to negotiate with all solicitude their restoration to life.

Third Point.—Consider the manner in which Christ restored this dead girl to life, namely, telling her to arise, and taking her by the hand, and forthwith, as Luke tells us, she arose and walked. These means thou art likewise to make use of in order to withdraw thy neighbours from the death of sin to the life of grace, arousing them by words and urging them by deeds. Take heed lest thy deeds be not in accordance with thy words, and thou condemn in action what thou wouldst establish with the lips, thereby rendering thine endeavours fruitless. Both words and deeds are needful, even as Christ made use of words, commanding the dead girl to arise, and likewise of His mighty Arm, taking her hand and raising her up. O Lord, take me by the hand, and call me ; awaken me from the death of sin, and give me Thy Hand and efficacious aid, that I also may awaken my brethren, and by the help of Thy grace perform such works as shall animate them with a new life, to be eternally employed in Thy service.

Fourth Point.—Contemplate the joy of the parents of this girl, who, St. Luke tells us, was but twelve years old, when they beheld her arise from death to life. Consider what delight filled their souls, what gratitude they expressed to Christ, and the jubilee of all the household. Ponder the praise and admiration that filled the whole city, and how the fame of the miracle spread throughout that region. And as this maiden was of such illustrious birth, people from all parts doubtless flocked to visit and congratulate both the parents and the daughter, and all would be greatly rejoiced, incessantly extolling Christ, and publishing a thousand praises concerning Him. Rejoice with their joy, and exult to see Christ so honoured and praised ; spare not thy voice, but magnify

the Power of God, and extol His Pity and Compassion for all, striving to make Him known to the whole world. Consider also that if the resurrection of the body which must die anew causes all this joy and gladness, what must be the jubilee of God and of His Angels in heaven over the resurrection of a soul which is immortal and will enjoy God eternally. O God ! all things here below are mere shadows in comparison with Thy glory ; lift up our hearts on high, and grant us grace to occupy ourselves in praising Thee, and in procuring the spiritual life of our neighbours, that we may give glory to Thee by their resurrection, and afford joy and gladness to the Angels of heaven.

NINETY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE WOMAN AFFLICTED WITH AN ISSUE OF BLOOD,
WHO WAS HEALED BY TOUCHING THE HEM OF CHRIST'S
GARMENT.

First Point.—Consider how this woman had, as St. Luke tells us, spent all her fortune on doctors and remedies, and had suffered much for twelve years, without regaining her health, and by merely touching the hem of Christ's garment it was restored to her. Herein thou shouldst learn of what little avail are human means for restoring either the health of the body or that of the soul unless God lends His aid, and that the smallest inclination of His Will is more efficacious than all the might of creatures. Learn hence to address thyself to God in thy necessities, and not to the world, for oftentimes He ordains that ordinary means should be powerless and ineffectual in order that our very need should lead us to His Feet, and compel us to seek Him for our relief. Oh, Thou Good God ! Oh, infinite charity ! Oh, love so in-

effably great that even from afar Thou workest our good ! Who failest us not, even though the whole world fail us, but dost assist us the more, bestowing yet greater favours. Blessed be Thou for ever. No one, O Lord, has greater need than I have of approaching Thy Presence. Have mercy upon me, and grant health to my soul as Thou didst to the body of this woman.

Second Point.—Consider that all this woman's gain arose out of the knowledge she had of her infirmity, and from the grief it caused her ; thus must all thy profit accrue to thee from the knowledge of thy sins, and the grief and affliction with which they should inspire thee. Oh, that thou didst know the many sins that oppress thy soul, sinner that thou art ! That thou didst perceive how great an evil it is to lose God, and that thou didst grieve with thy whole heart for having offended Him ! how thou wouldst then seek the cure of thy soul and come broken-hearted to God ! Open thine eyes, by reflection, to see how bitter a thing it is to have outraged so great a Master, to have exchanged His friendship for that of Satan, to have preferred the creature to the Creator, death to life, hell to heaven, eternal damnation to everlasting bliss. Weigh deliberately this truth, ruminate this thought until sin has become nauseous to thee, until thou perceive thy necessities, and until they lead thee to the Feet of thy Redeemer, Who is the Physician of thy soul.

Third Point.—Consider the nature of the infirmity that afflicted this woman in the flesh and of that which afflicts thy soul, namely, a continuous flow of transgressions, daily heaping sin upon sin uninterruptedly. Review the senses of thy body, and see how many sins thou daily committest through them, then examine thy thoughts and thy will, and consider how greatly thou dost also arouse the anger of God by them, and beg from Him with tears the pardon of thy offences, sorrow for having displeased Him, and grace not to sin again.

Fourth Point.—Consider what St. Matthew tells us

that this woman did to recover her health. First, she spoke within herself, saying, "If I shall touch only His garment I shall be healed;" secondly, she approached with faith; thirdly, she touched the hem of Christ's garment and was forthwith healed. Wherein we are taught that our spiritual cure lies in three things, namely, the word, faith, and works: hearkening to the Word of God and obeying it, believing His doctrine, placing our trust in Him, and fulfilling His commandments in our actions. Contemplate the disease of thy soul; see what remedies and medicaments thou shouldst apply to heal it, and resolve to seek and to employ them, imploring God to deign to heal thee.

NINETY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THAT SALUTARY REMEDY, THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT
OF THE ALTAR.

First Point.—Consider how St. Luke tells us that, after raising the ruler's daughter to life, Christ "bid them give her to eat," both in proof of her resurrection, and likewise for the maintenance of the life restored to her. Wherein He taught us that the Divine Food, which His Hand prepared for us in the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar, renovates the life of grace, preserves and increases it after the manner of ordinary Food. Consider Its efficacy and the need thou hast of It, venerate It as thou shouldst, and be eager to receive It, giving many thanks to God for the incomparable grace He has done thee in the bestowal of this Bread of Life for the preservation of thy soul.

Second Point.—Consider the lively faith with which that afflicted woman approached Christ, and to which He attributed her cure, and contemplate with what faith thou shouldst approach to receive Christ. Realise by medita-

tion what it is that is given thee in this Food. Behold the majesty of the Lord that thou receivest therein, and reflect on the losses occasioned thee by thy want of faith. Beg of God to give thee knowledge concerning Him, and a lively faith wherewith to receive Him, so as to merit the health this sacrament confers on those who approach it worthily.

Third Point.—Consider that this woman did not touch directly the Person of Christ, but only the hem of His garment, and thereby obtained her cure. Thus do they who receive this sacrament touch but the species, which are as the hem of the garment, and from this contact comes forth from Christ's Divine Body the virtue which heals. O heavenly morsel! O Divine Food! of which the mere touch has such power; for if the garment of the Saviour have such virtue, how much greater must not be that of His most Holy Body, Which is given us in this heavenly Food? Ponder this, and beg of God grace to receive Him worthily, and so to feed on Him as to receive also the health of the soul, which this sacrament communicates.

Fourth Point.—Lay stress on the consideration of what St. Luke describes, namely, that the Saviour being surrounded on all sides and oppressed by the multitude, this woman made her way to Him as best she could, and when she touched the hem of His garment Christ felt that virtue went out from Him and healed her. Ponder how different one touch is from another, and how many sick persons touched Him who were not healed, because they had not the faith of this woman. How many receive and touch the Saviour who receive not the health and graces that He bestows, because they approach not with proper dispositions, nor with the faith that they should bring. See whether thou dost possess it, or whether thou dost forfeit these graces through lack of faith; reproach thyself with thy negligence; beg of God to prepare thy soul and to give thee the lively faith and confidence of this holy woman, in order that, touching

Him as she did, thou mayest recover the health of thy soul as she recovered that of her body.

NINETY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE FOURTH BEATITUDE: "BLESSED ARE THEY THAT HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER JUSTICE, FOR THEY SHALL HAVE THEIR FILL."

First Point.—Consider that, as St. Jerome says, God is not satisfied with a mere desire on our part of serving Him, but He likewise requires that we should hunger and thirst after virtue, namely, that we should have a keen yearning after sanctity and an eager longing to acquire it, similar to the hunger and thirst which afflict persons deprived of food until their want has been supplied. Ponder here what St. Bernard says, namely, that hunger and thirst grant no reprieve, neither can they be put off; for, like impatient creditors who will be satisfied at once, the cravings of hunger and the fierce fire of thirst will endure no delay in their eagerness for relief. Such is the ardour and longing that God would have us experience with regard to virtue, and He numbers those who possess them amongst His elect. Examine thy heart, and see whether thou dost hunger and thirst after virtue and sanctity, whether thy tardiness in acquiring it afflicts thee, and what efforts thou makest to achieve it. Reproach thyself with thy tepidity and sloth; beg of God to give thee this longing, and to enkindle in thy soul this sacred fire, that thou mayest merit to be of the number of the blessed.

Second Point.—Consider that desires are the flowers that spring up in the heart, and that from them our actions proceed as the fruit from the flower, wherefore good desires always precede good works, and he who

lacks the former will also be wanting in the latter. When God wishes to favour a soul He first inspires it with the desire of His graces, in order that it may ask for them, hope for them, and seek them by every means; thus He gave to Holy Simeon a great desire of beholding the Messiah, and then fulfilled it before his death. Whence thou shouldst learn two things: first, to enliven thy desires by prayer and meditation, in order to merit thereby the mercies of the Lord. Secondly, to value the good desires with which God inspires thee, and to endeavour with all thy might to obtain their accomplishment; for the Lord has promised so to satisfy the hunger and thirst of those who long for virtue, that they shall have their fill, that is, be satiated by the realisation of their wishes.

Third Point.—Consider with St. Jerome, that Christ calls those blessed that hunger and thirst after virtue, meaning those who are never satisfied with what they have already acquired, but are ever longing for more and more. This is what God requires of thee, that thou be never content with the degree of virtue to which thou hast attained, but that always desiring more and aspiring to greater perfection thou travel onwards, making ever fresh progress, without looking back. See, then, whether thou dost merit to be placed in the category of the elect, constantly progressing in mortification, humility, contempt of self, desire of heaven, in the love of God and of thy neighbour, in patience, meekness, compassion, and all other virtues. Consider what was thy condition at the beginning of thy conversion and what it now is; cry aloud to heaven, and beg pardon of God for thy negligence; pray for fervour to begin the ascent of the high mountain of sanctity, so as to reach, without halting, to the summit of perfection.

Fourth Point.—Consider that not only are they blessed who hunger and thirst after their own sanctification, but those also who yearn for that of their neighbour, and this desire proceeds from true charity and love of God. Thus

St. Chrysostom¹ tells us that Christ calls sanctity a sun, because it produces thirst, even as the internal heat that parches the tongue excites natural thirst. Oh, my soul ! examine whether thou dost yearn for the salvation of thy neighbour, whether thou art grieved at his straying therefrom, whether thou canst sleep and eat comfortably in sight of so many who are damned for their evil lives ; or whether zeal for the glory of God and the spiritual welfare of souls is constantly gnawing at thy heart, and consuming thee interiorly, allowing thee no repose. Urged by this hunger and this thirst, dost thou cry aloud to God for their welfare, chastising thyself for their sins, imploring Him to prevent them, and to give these souls light to serve Him and grace to save themselves ? If thou dost this, and this anxiety destroys thy sleep and nails thee to the cross, then believe that it is well with thee. If thou hast no care for thy neighbour, nor grief for his condemnation, thou hast no thirst for souls, nor dost thou merit to be counted amongst the blessed, to whom God promises repletion and the fulfilment of their desires. Look a little further, and behold the hunger and thirst that Christ suffered for thy salvation and for that of all mankind ; see all that He did for souls, and learn to thirst for thy neighbours, and to do everything that thou canst for them.

NINETY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE REWARD THAT GOD OFFERS TO THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER JUSTICE : THAT THEY SHALL HAVE THEIR FILL.

First Point.—Consider that Christ promises repletion to those who yearn after virtue, and who thirst for

¹ Chry. in chap. i. Matt.

sanctity ; because, as St. John Chrysostom says, in God alone is complete satisfaction to be found, for He alone satiates the heart ; whilst the wealth and pleasures of this world, however abundant, always leave it void, and can never content it. Wherefore David says,¹ "The rich have wanted, and have suffered hunger ; but they that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good," but rather all their longings and desires shall be fulfilled, because God is their fulfilment, Whom alone they love and seek and desire to please. Meditate slowly how heavy is the cross that the followers of this world have to bear, ever contradicted in their wishes and unsatisfied in their desires. Ponder in like manner the peace and satisfaction enjoyed by the servants of God, ever tranquil and content in the accomplishment of His Will, desiring naught else in the whole world, their hearts fixed on heaven, satisfied with the hope of the fruition of God, joyous by His grace and the possession of Him in this life, and the confidence of enjoying Him in the next. See to which of these classes thou wouldst belong, and how important it is to be numbered amongst the just, and not amongst sinners. Beg of God grace to imitate the former and not the latter, to despise the world, and to yearn for naught else but His honour and glory, and that sanctity which is acquired in His service.

Second Point.—Consider that, according to the sentiment of St. Austin, Christ promises repletion to the just, even in this life, because already here He grants them the fulfilment of their desires, and places within their reach that fountain of water springing up unto eternal life, whereof the Saviour has said that they that drink shall thirst no more. The waters of the earth are brackish, and instead of appeasing thirst they excite it ; but the spiritual waters of heaven extinguish it in such wise that they who drink thereof thirst no more ; wherefore St. Jerome says that he who has once tasted spiritual viands loses all appetite for carnal food. Beg, then, of

¹ Psalm xxxiii.

God, with the Samaritan woman, to give thee of this water of devotion and sanctity, wherewith to appease the thirst of earthly goods and of worldly delights, in order that thou may no longer desire aught but heavenly things, with the contentment that they afford.

Third Point.—Consider that, as St. John Chrysostom affirms, God will completely satisfy the hunger and thirst of the good in this life, because He will grant them His grace without limit, and the spiritual advantages that they yearn for, together with the temporal things they did not seek after, leaving no void in their heart. O Thou generous Paymaster! O Sovereign Prince! how superabundantly dost Thou recompense Thy servants, since Thy rewards outstrip their longings, and the prize Thou bestowest is incomparably greater than anything to which they could aspire. Blessed are they that desire Thee, and who yearn after Thy glory and Thy service, since Thou dost so perfectly satisfy their longings. I beseech Thee, O Lord, to grant me Thy grace, neither to desire, nor prize, nor seek anything but Thee and for Thee, for Thy glory, for Thy holy service, and the salvation of my soul; may I no longer have any other will than Thine, no other pleasure or interest than Thy holy service, for ever and ever.

Fourth Point.—Lastly, consider that perfect contentment is the inheritance of heaven, of which David says,¹ “I shall be satisfied when Thy glory shall appear,” for there true contentment will be found in the satisfaction of all our desires and appetites, of the senses and of the powers of the soul. True beatitude only exists there, where there is nothing more to desire, no consolation to await, no hunger nor thirst for anything, great or small, to be appeased; for God will satisfy all desires, He will content all longings, and leave no wish unfulfilled, no void, nor aught imperfect. This satisfaction the Lord bestows in reward of the hunger and thirst that His elect have endured in this life for the things of His service,

¹ Psalm xvi.

and in their yearning after sanctity. Oh, blessed desires that merit such a reward ! Oh, my soul ! learn to raise thine eyes and yearn after the beatitude that awaits thee ; contemplate that contentment, and the entire fulfilment of all desires that is found in heaven, and long for nothing else than to be there united with God, Who will be the eternal satisfaction of all the elect, leaving them nothing more to wish for.

NINETY-NINTH MEDITATION.

For the Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost.

ON THE GOSPEL—(MATT. XXIV.)

This Gospel treats of the coming of Antichrist, and of the signs that will precede the Day of Judgment ; it describes how the Lord will come with great power and majesty, and will raise the dead, assembling them all in one place, where He will deliver the final sentence of the universal Judgment.

First Point.—Consider that persecutions must arise, and that they will become more severe as the end of the world approaches, and also that each one of us will experience greater contradictions as our life draws to its close. The devil, as he perceives the time of his warfare against man to be nearing its close, strives the more eagerly to overthrow him, and Christ warns us of what His Church will have to suffer, in order that we should be prepared and establish ourselves the more firmly in virtue. Ponder how important this matter is to thee ; for if the most exalted cedars be endangered, what security can be enjoyed by those who have no roots or strength to resist the storm of tribulation ? Humble thyself before God, and implore His grace to fortify and ground thyself in faith, and charity, and all virtue, in order that thou mayest thus be powerful to resist thine enemy.

Second Point.—Consider that God already sends thee tribulations and persecutions, in order that thou mayest accustom thyself to resist the greater ones which will arise before the Day of Judgment, and if thou yieldest under present trials, breaking out into impatience, how wilt thou resist those to come? Behold God and all the celestial court watching how thou dost battle, in order to bestow on thee the crown of victory. Suffer, then, with patience; be constant, and see that thou forfeit it not. Cry aloud to God, arm thyself with prayer and the holy sacraments, and trust in His Bounty, that He will be ever present at thy side, nor ever leave thee if thou leave Him not, nor dost withdraw from His service.

Third Point.—Consider how Christ tells His Apostles to fly to the mountains when tribulation shall come, and not to return to save anything from their houses. Wherein He admonishes us to retire to the mountain of solitude, and to withdraw from dangerous occasions, in order not to be overcome; to postpone temporal concerns to spiritual ones, and our wealth, property, friends, and relatives to the profit of our souls. Oh, my soul! what an important lesson thou hast to learn from these words, if thou dost but know how to make use of it. Retire with God to the high mountain of contemplation; fly from evil occasions into which thou mightest fall and be vanquished. Despise earthly things in order to attain to things celestial, thou canst lose nothing thereby, and if thou dost gain heaven thou wilt have nothing more to desire. Follow the counsel of Christ, and leave all things in order to purchase heaven and eternal glory.

Fourth Point.—Consider how Christ tells us not to wait to make our flight in the winter, or on the Sabbath-day, but to beg of the Lord strength to place ourselves in safety before that time arrives. The winter of life is old age, when the summit of our head is whitened with grey hairs, the blood is chilled in our veins, and the whole body, enfeebled and full of infirmities, is like a

house threatening decay. The Sabbath is the last day of the week, and thus Christ counsels us not to wait to prepare ourselves for His coming till the latter portion of our life, when old age makes us incapable of labouring; nor for our last illness and the point of death, when the sun of life goes down, and we remain to die in obscurity, without time to accumulate merit. Oh, what a grievous error to delay, till too late, to prepare for the coming of so great a Lord! Reflect and observe carefully how brief is the span of life, how important it is not to be vanquished in this battle, and that coming tribulation should not find thee unprepared. See how great an error it were to repose tranquilly now, when thou art not safe for a single day, and to await a time which may never be thine; and even wert thou to attain it, it would yet be the worst and most unsuitable of thy life, bringing with itself impediments of its own to oppose thee and hinder thy preparation and the defence thou shouldst make. Behold how many have been deceived by this presumption and vain confidence who are now burning in hell! And since this is so, follow the advice of Christ; cast thyself at His Feet, and implore Him with tears that thy flight be not in the winter of life, but now; that thou mayest not await the last hour, but with the help of His grace prepare for it forthwith, considering to-day as the last of thy life, and as though thou hadst now to die.

HUNDREDTH MEDITATION.

For the Monday.

ON THE END OF THE WORLD, AND THE SIGNS OF ITS APPROACH.

First Point.—Consider that the last calamity that Christ prophesies to the world is the coming of Antichrist, to deceive men by feigned holiness and apparent

though false miracles, whereby many will be led astray, waging open war against Christ, and thus he will be styled Antichrist, that is, opposer of Christ. Consider, next, whether this calamity has not fallen on our times, when so many feign holiness, when mock-miracles and false virtue are common, and when so many openly strive against Christ, perverting souls. And this not only amongst infidels and heretics, but within the very fold of the Church, amongst Christians, who, as the Apostle says, are Antichrists, meriting that name by their works. Bewail the evils of our time, the ingratitude of bad Christians, and the loss of so many souls by their means, and entreat the Lord to remedy so terrible a calamity, and to grant thee strength and valour to wage war against it. Offer thyself to the service of God, and to do on thy part thine utmost to repair in thyself and in others the evil wrought amongst the faithful by false prophets and bad Christians.

Second Point.—Consider the sign that Christ mentions in the Gospel of the approach of this calamity, namely, when the Holy Place shall be profaned, and an idol set up to be worshipped in the Temple. Consider how the churches of God are profaned, how ill they are served, and how trampled on is His worship; bewail with Jeremias its destruction, and pray to God, imploring Him not to vent His wrath upon His people, but to be mindful of His mercy, and to set a term to so many evils.

Third Point.—Consider how often thou hast set up the idols of thy affections and appetites in the temple of thy soul, where God placed His image, and where He wills to be adored. Tremble, O sinner! at sight of thine idolatry. Behold, on the one hand, how many idols of honour, wealth, and pleasure thou hast worshipped, bending thy knee to them before the altar of thy heart, and turning thy back on God; and on the other, see the wrath of God and the arm of His justice raised against thee. Wait not for His anger to strike, but at once,

whilst there is yet time, cast thyself at His Feet, and implore His forgiveness, do penance ; bewail thy sins, and forestall the day of judgment.

Fourth Point.—Consider the warning that Christ gives us not to give credit to every doctrine, nor to run after all who invite us, even though they seem just and holy ; for many false prophets will arise, and the tribulation of those days will be “such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, neither shall be,” and God will shorten its duration, lest the very elect be perverted. Meditate leisurely on all this, and derive, first, a lesson not to hearken easily to every doctrine, especially where it varies in the least point from the teaching of Christ and of His Saints, for it then bears the stamp of error ; secondly, elicit sentiments of love and confidence in God, seeing the care He has of His elect, shortening times and epochs for their good, and in order that they may not fall into temptation. Blessed be so good a Lord, so vigilant and provident a Pastor of His flock for endless ages, Amen. Render Him a thousand thanks for this boundless love that He manifests towards His elect ; implore Him to extend over thee the mantle of His mercy, and to guard and protect thee as one of His own.

HUNDRED AND FIRST MEDITATION.

For the Tuesday.

ON THE COMING OF THE LORD AND THE SIGNS THEREOF.

First Point.—Consider how, when the end of time shall have come, the world will exhibit signs of dissolution, as men do when the term of their existence draws near, and, as Christ tells us, the sun will be darkened, the moon will cease to give light, the heavens will be shaken and lose the harmony of their action, the stars will fall from the skies, all the elements will be disturbed,

the whole machinery of the universe will fall into disorder, and fearful confusion will prevail. Consider how all things have an end, and ponder what will be the sentiments of the wicked when they perceive the time of God's justice to be at hand, and His wrath about to overwhelm them ; and if they now tremble at a flash of lightning or a clap of thunder, with what terror will they not be seized at the fearful lightning and thunder-bolts that will accompany the falling of the stars when they shall rain upon the earth and consume it? Reflect on the vanity of this world, and how utterly the scene will be changed, when all distinctions of kings, princes, lords, and monarchs will be destroyed, and all men will be equal, having none to succour them, unable to help themselves, and alone save for the company of their works. Open now thine eyes, and consider deliberately what thou wouldst then wish to have done, and set about putting it in practice.

Second Point.—Consider what Christ says, namely, He will send His Angels before Him to announce His coming, with a trumpet and a loud voice to assemble all men from the four corners of the world, and that at the sound of that trumpet the dead shall arise and appear before the tribunal of Christ, to be judged each man according to his manner of life. Then will the wicked weep and the just rejoice, as they will respectively have cause for fear or hope, according to the life they have led. Meditate slowly on this resurrection, and ponder what position thou wilt occupy there in the face of the whole world. Derive from this reflection a true perception of the vanity of this fleeting world, and firm resolutions to so dispose the concerns of thy soul as to be prepared for the future.

Third Point.—Consider how the Lord says that He will come on the clouds in great power and majesty, and that the tribes and nations of the earth will tremble and wail at His coming, especially those who wept not here below, but gave themselves up to rejoicing and the delights of this life. Set order to thy life by mortification

and penance, so that thou mayest then rejoice with the blessed, and not have to weep with the reprobate.

Fourth Point.—Lay stress on the consideration of those last words of Christ, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." Ponder the depth of this truth, and the permanent duration of the future life ; measure it with the shortness of this life, and thou wilt perceive that the latter is but as a dream of an instant in comparison with the length of the next. Extend thy gaze by consideration over that long vista of endless ages ; behold that period without limit for ever, and bewail the blindness of those who, for the sake of enjoying this breath of false and deceitful life, forfeit the delights of that which is real and eternal. Implore the Lord most tenderly to undeceive them, and to grant thee grace not to fall into a like error, but that, despising all the frail and perishable things of time, thou mayest attain to the enjoyment of that life which is blessed and unending.

HUNDRED AND SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Wednesday.

ON THE FIFTH BEATITUDE : "BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL,
FOR THEY SHALL OBTAIN MERCY."

First Point.—Consider that, in accordance with the Divine law and doctrine, we are bound to love our neighbour as ourselves, and consequently, as St. Remegius, quoted by St. Thomas, affirms, to consider his misfortunes our own, and to pity him as we should ourselves. See, then, whether thou dost fulfil this law, or whether thou followest a contrary direction, being very pitiful towards thyself and very harsh towards thy neighbour. Turn over a new leaf, and show mercy to thy brethren, even as thou wouldst have them show mercy to thee ; mete to

them the same measure as to thyself, and beg of God grace to carry out this counsel, and to be numbered amongst those whom Christ here calls blessed.

Second Point.—Consider the mercy of God in thy regard; how many are the sins He forgives thee; how He compassionates thy anxieties and succours thee in thy needs. Remember that Christ has said, “Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful;”¹ and study to imitate this mercy, dealing with thy neighbour as God deals with thee. Beg of God to favour thee, in order that thou mayest imitate His example and be merciful like Him.

Third Point.—Ponder how great is thy need of God’s clemency; reflect what would be thy fate were He not to show thee mercy, but to treat thee, on the contrary, with rigorous justice. Consider the reward that God promises to the merciful, namely, that He will show them mercy, not only in this life, but likewise in the next, in proof of which, on the day of judgment, He will make mention of no other virtue but of this one alone, saying to the elect,² “Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat,” &c. And the wicked He will cast into hell, because they showed not the like mercy towards their neighbours. If, then, thou wouldst experience this mercy in thy person now and hereafter, do thou manifest the like towards thy neighbour; for he that shows mercy prepares himself for the day of judgment, as David³ says, and he that does not prepares his own condemnation.

Fourth Point.—Have pity likewise on thine own soul, remembering the words of Ecclesiasticus,⁴ “Who will justify him that sinneth against his own soul.” Observe the miseries that afflict thy soul; its wants, and how thou dost neglect it; acknowledge that thy first duty is towards this thy nearest neighbour, and take pity on

¹ Luke vi. 36; Matt. v. 45.

³ Ps. xi.

² Matt. xxv. 34.

⁴ Eccles. x.

thyself. Listen attentively to the appeals it addresses to thee ; hearken to the remorse of thy conscience ; heed its cries, succour it, assist and console it ; withdraw it from vice and sin by the help of God's grace, which He will grant thee, that thou mayst improve and perfect it in all virtue, and find mercy with the Lord.

HUNDRED AND THIRD MEDITATION.

For the Thursday.

ON THE SIXTH BEATITUDE : " BLESSED ARE THE CLEAN OF HEART, FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD."

First Point.—Consider how great is the importance of this virtue of purity, since the vision of God depends on its possession to such an extent that, being possessed of the other virtues, if this rectitude of intention be wanting in the exercise of the virtues of poverty, meekness, zeal for souls, mercy towards the poor, and patience in adversity, and the soul be stained with sentiments of self-love, it cannot attain heaven. St. Paul bears witness to this when he says,¹ " And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." Whence derive a very high appreciation of Divine grace and of purity of heart in order to seek it, and secure it with all the energy of thy soul, and to beg it of God more continually and earnestly than any other virtue. Reflect here how many of thy works have been made void by lack of it, and bewail thy losses, studying how to repair them in thy future life.

Second Point.—Consider that, as St. Austin and St. Bernard remark, this beatitude is not attached to purity of body, but to purity of soul ; it is not for those of pure blood, however refined, but for those whose conscience is pure. Consider how deluded worldlings are who set such

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 3.

value on beauty and cleanliness of person, on purity of blood and dignity of lineage, which are of such small value in the sight of God, and at the same time neglect the purity of soul and heart whereby the vision of God is reached. Open the eyes of thy soul, and behold how quickly this dream will pass away, and truth will dispel falsehood. Consider how little beauty and nobility will then avail; what will then be the worth of an illustrious earthly lineage, and of all that the world worships, when purity of heart will alone be prized, together with the grace and friendship of God acquired thereby? Wherefore make it thy study to procure the latter and to despise the former.

Third Point.—Consider how St. Jerome remarks on these words,¹ that as God is so pure He will only suffer Himself to be seen by the very pure and clean of heart; for if every one prefers those who bear their resemblance, much more so is this the case with God. Wherefore Solomon says,² “He that loveth cleanliness of heart for the grace of his lips shall have the King for his friend;” for God will incline towards him and will favour him. On the other hand, God abhors those who are defiled with the stain of sin. Learn from the consideration of this truth to hate all uncleanness, and to love purity of soul with all the strength of thy heart, in order to merit the vision of God.

Fourth Point.—Consider the greatness of this reward, the blessedness of those who secure it, and the misery of those who forfeit it; for its extent is boundless, all our bliss being centred in the vision of God, whereby we possess Him, and in Him all that we can desire. It is therefore impossible for any creature to attain to greater felicity than this, nor to suffer any greater misfortune than to forfeit it, and be condemned to eternal torments. Oh, reward that exceeds every reward! oh, joy surpassing all joy! oh, true felicity, which includes and comprises all delights that can be desired! Grant me, O my Lord,

¹ Matt. v.

² Prov. xxii.

Thy grace to cleanse my heart with tears, and to purge it of all dross and from every stain of sin by the fire of contrition; grant that my soul and heart may henceforth be always pure, so as to merit to see Thee. This alone do I beseech of Thee with David; this alone will I entreat and implore, to dwell in Thy house and abide under Thy protection all the days of my life, nor be separated from Thee for ever and ever. Amen.

HUNDRED AND FOURTH MEDITATION.

For the Friday.

ON THE SEVENTH BEATITUDE: "BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS, FOR THEY SHALL BE CALLED THE CHILDREN OF GOD."

First Point.—Consider that peace with God is that most important peace which is the foundation of all other peace, the possession of which ensures peace with ourselves and with every one else; whilst in its absence we can enjoy none within ourselves nor with any one else. Wherefore St. Paul says:¹ "The kingdom of God is . . . justice, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;" for he that is at peace with God becomes His temple, wherein He dwells by the grace of the Holy Ghost. It is for this reason that Christ gives the title of blessed to the peacemakers in whom God abides. Contemplate their bliss, what merit they accumulate, what graces they continually receive from such a companion and friend, and pray to God, saying, Grant me, O Lord, that peace which the world cannot give, bestow Thy friendship upon me, and let me not forfeit it or separate myself from Thee, for all that the world possesses.

Second Point.—Consider that, as St. Jerome says, this blessedness is not for those alone who enjoy peace with

¹ Rom. xiv.

themselves, but likewise for those who are at peace with their neighbours, and strive to maintain concord amongst others: these are the peacemakers on whom Christ bestows the title of blessed and of children of God, whilst the quarrelsome and pugnacious are the sons of Satan, who sow discord amongst their brethren. Reflect on all this, and see how pleasing to God and man are the peaceful, and how odious the quarrelsome. Entreat the Lord to grant thee grace to be an angel of peace amongst thy brethren, and to free thee from all spirit of discord, in order that thou mayst merit to be called the child of God.

Third Point.—Consider how great a virtue is this peace with God, with ourselves, and with all men, of which St. Paul says ¹ that it “surpasseth all understanding;” for, possessing it, there is naught else to be desired. Ponder the joy of soul and tranquillity of conscience which the peacemakers enjoy in common with the blessed in heaven; reflect that if they deserve the title of sons of God, by a legitimate consequence they merit to be heirs of His glory. On the other hand, behold the contentious and quarrelsome, who have no peace with themselves nor with their neighbours; what constant strife and bitterness reign in those souls, destined for hell. Raise thy heart and soul to God, solicit this virtue from Him, and leave no stone unturned in the endeavour to acquire it.

Fourth Point.—Consider that, as St. Paul says, Christ reconciled the world with His Eternal Father, and came down from heaven to establish peace amongst men; to restore peace has thus become the work of His right Hand, and His especial attribute, wherefore Isaias calls Him the Prince of Peace. Reflect at what cost Christ established this peace, and how great a mercy He conferred on men by reconciling them with God, and render Him abundant thanks for it. Entreat Him, as He grants peace to all, not to suffer thee alone to remain at war as an enemy of God, but to bestow on thee His friendship,

¹ Philip. iv.

and to be ever thy friend. Strive to secure this favour at whatever cost or labour, and never forfeit it again.

HUNDRED AND FIFTH MEDITATION.

For the Saturday.

ON THE LAST BEATITUDE: "BLESSED ARE THEY THAT SUFFER PERSECUTION FOR JUSTICE SAKE, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN."

First Point.—Consider that the servants of Christ never lack persecutors, according to His words,¹ "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you;" wherefore it is needful that thou be convinced of this truth, and prepare thyself for persecutions. The world loves its own sectaries, and persecutes those who refuse to become such; wherefore thou shouldst consider it a good sign to be persecuted and hated by the world, and give thanks to God for it, esteeming it a favour from the Lord, as did the Apostles of whom St. Luke writes:² "And they indeed went from the council rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus." Such should also be thy conduct, if thou pride thyself on being His disciple.

Second Point.—Consider how much men endure for worldly interests; some to secure wealth, others for the sake of honour, others for sensual pleasures, jeopardising their very lives. Blush at thy reluctance to suffer for Christ's sake and for the welfare of thy soul, lesser evils if they hope for no adequate reward for their labours, whilst an eternal recompense awaits thee, incomparably greater than all that the world can offer.

Third Point.—Following the advice of the Apostle St. Paul,³ let us fix our eyes by contemplation on Christ, our only good and our Master, and "Run by patience to the

¹ John xv.

² Acts v.

³ Heb. xii.

fight proposed to us," to which the crown is promised. Let us contemplate Him "Who, having joy set before Him, endured the Cross, despising the shame," for the sake of the honour of His Eternal Father, and for our eternal salvation. Beg of Him to draw thee after Him, and to give thee strength and grace to bear thy cross in His company to the end.

Fourth Point.—Gaze on that multitude of Martyrs and Saints who have followed and still follow Christ along the way of the Cross, enduring insults and contumely with joy. Then go a step farther and behold the reward they have secured and the glory they enjoy, crowned in company with the Lamb. See what awaits thee if thou be but patient as they were, and let their example urge thee to suffer persecution from whatsoever quarter it may arise, even though it be at the hands of friends and relations, and from those of thine own household. Consider not who causes thy suffering, but think of Him for Whom thou sufferest; offer it all to the Lord, from Whose Hand it comes, and be patient and joyful in enduring, confident in the Divine Mercy that thy sufferings will be crowned with eternal rewards.

Eaus Deo Semper.

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